

Autofiction in translation: Translating Vickie Gendreau's *Testament*

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Autofiction in translation: Translating Vickie Gendreau's *Testament*

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Vickie Gendreau's first novel is a "testament" in both title and act. Written in the face of the author's imminent death following her diagnosis with an inoperable brain tumour, *Testament* is a challenging autofiction that inverts the elegy and plays with the form of the testament – a novel about the carrying out of her own last testaments that is a testament in itself. A text that challenges the distinctions of fiction and autobiography, its hybrid of forms and traditions presents a particular set of challenges for its translation into English.

My thesis project addresses my translation of *Testament*. Two excerpts of my translation are prefaced by a commentary in which I contextualize the novel as a text drawing on traditions of autofiction, elegy, and the testament and trace out a context for this work in English. I examine the challenges that arise in its translation and how I've chosen to address them, including cultural references, linguistic hybridity, wordplay and puns, and issues of gender in translation.

Autofiction en traduction: Traduire le *Testament* de Vickie Gendreau

Aimee Wall

Le premier roman de l'auteure Vickie Gendreau est un « testament » en titre ainsi qu'en acte. Face à la mort imminent à la suite de son diagnostic avec une tumeur de cerveau, Gendreau a écrit *Testament*, une autofiction ambitieuse qui inverse l'élegie et joue avec la forme du testament – un roman dont le sujet est un testament qui est un testament en soi. Un texte qui défie les distinctions entre la fiction et l'autobiographie, cet hybride des formes et traditions présente des défis particuliers en traduction vers l'anglais.

Mon projet de mémoire traite la traduction de *Testament*. Deux extraits de la traduction sont précédés d'un commentaire critique où je présente le roman comme texte qui s'inspire des traditions de l'autofiction, de l'élegie, et du testament, et je propose un contexte pour le roman en anglais. J'examine les défis de la traduction et comment je les ai résolues, y compris des références culturelles, l'hybridité linguistique, des jeux de mots et des questions de genre en traduction.

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“Before coming to writing, literature depends on reading and the right conferred on it by an experience of reading. One can read the same text – which thus never exists ‘in itself’ – as a testimony that is said to be serious and authentic, or as an archive, or as a document, or as a symptom – or as a work of literary fiction, indeed the work of a literary fiction that simulates all of the positions that we have just enumerated.”

Jacques Derrida, *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*

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Introduction

Vickie Gendreau's first novel is a "testament" in both title and act. Written in the face of the author's imminent death following her diagnosis with an inoperable brain tumour, *Testament* is a challenging autofiction that inverts the elegy and plays with the form of the testament – a novel about the carrying out of her own last testaments that is a testament in itself. Jacques Derrida wrote of Maurice Blanchot's *L'instant de ma mort*: "I do not know whether this text belongs, purely and properly and strictly and rigorously speaking, to the space of literature, whether it is a fiction or a testimony, and, above all, to what extent it calls these distinctions into question or causes them all to tremble" (Derrida 2000, 26). *Testament* has claimed its place in 'the space of literature' while challenging the forms of the novel and the testament and the distinctions of fiction and autobiography. This hybrid of forms and traditions presents a particular set of challenges for its translation into English.

My thesis project addresses my translation of *Testament*. I will contextualize the novel as a text drawing on traditions of autofiction, elegy, and the testament and trace out a context for this work in English. I will examine the challenges that arise in its translation and how I've chosen to address them, including cultural references, the use of English in a French text, wordplay and puns, and issues of gender in translation.

The author, the text and its reception

Vickie Gendreau was twenty-four when she passed away in the spring of 2013. Though she was already an active member of the literary community in Montreal, participating in readings and events like the Off-Festival de poésie de Trois-Rivières, *Testament* was Gendreau's first novel,

written after her diagnosis with an inoperable brain tumour. After the release of *Testament* in 2012, she completed a second manuscript, entitled *Drama Queens*, which was left upon her death in the care of her friend and mentor, the writer Mathieu Arsenault, and published in the spring of 2014.

Testament is a most urgent kind of autofiction, written in the face of fatal illness. The novel moves between the voice of “Vickie Gendreau,” speaking through texts she’s left to be delivered to her friends upon her death, and the voices of her friends as they react to her death and her texts, effectively creating a kind of conversation of each chapter. As Audrée Wilhelmy writes in *Salon Double*,

Ces «legs», composés de différents documents très courts, mettent en scène plusieurs voix narratives distinctes qui dialoguent, parfois sans se répondre vraiment, dans un style plus près de la prose poétique que d’une narration conventionnelle (Wilhelmy 2013).

The novel moves from the present-tense of “Vickie’s” texts, in which she writes of her daily life, her treatments, and her feelings for and memories of the person reading the text, to a near-future in which “Vickie” has died and her friends are receiving her packages and reading the texts she’s written. Gendreau described her intentions for the novel in an interview with *La Presse*:

Dans mon livre, je fais réagir les gens à ma mort et, dans le fond, c’est parce que je veux qu’ils réagissent. Mais je sais que leur vie va continuer et que ça va être vulgaire. Je sais que je vais passer un peu rapidement. Je voulais officialiser ma mort, la dramatiser, la rendre plus palpable avant que ça arrive (Gendreau in Guy, 2012).

Gendreau uses a hybrid of several different genres or traditions in her attempt to ‘dramatize’ her death, to make it ‘official’: the last will or testament, the elegy (albeit here in an inverted form) and a confessional kind of autofiction.

Testament received much attention in Québec upon its release, and Gendreau's illness and life were inextricably tied to the reading and reception of the book. Reviews of the novel and interviews with Gendreau appeared in *La Presse*, *Le Devoir*, *Châtelaine*, and *Salon Double*, as well as on blogs and webzines such as *Les Méconnus*. *Testament* was among the seven long-listed novels for the 2013 Prix littéraire France-Québec. The novel was adapted for the stage by Eric Jean, who also directed the show, produced by Théâtre de Quat-Sous in Montreal in March 2014.

Much of the press for the novel focused on Gendreau herself rather than presenting a close reading or critique of the text. As Wilhelmy notes,

le tapage médiatique entourant la publication de *Testament* soulève la question de la réception de l'œuvre, et, plus précisément, celle de l'importance accordée aux données biographiques de son auteur. Les articles consacrés au roman, surtout ceux des grands périodiques, concernent assez peu le texte lui-même, et jouent sur le pathos, s'intéressant davantage à l'histoire –réellement tragique– de celle qui l'a écrit qu'à son œuvre (Wilhelmy 2013).

Coverage of the novel in *La Presse* exemplifies Wilhelmy's point: a profile piece by Chantal Guy, but no review. In *Le Devoir*, Danielle Laurin's review of the novel begins with a dramatic invocation of the context of its writing: "Imaginez. Vous venez de mourir. À 23 ans. Cancer du cerveau. Vous avez laissé un livre écrit dans l'urgence pour vos amis, votre ex, votre famille. Un livre-testament, dans lequel vous vous êtes mis à nu. Imaginez" (Laurin 2012). Laurin asserts, however, that there is a transformation that occurs in the process of writing one's life – that once written, it necessarily becomes a kind of fiction: "dès qu'il y a écriture, il y a transformation, il y a fiction" (Laurin 2012). She insists that *Testament* belongs in the realm of literature, "que nous sommes dans la littérature, dans l'écriture," this statement a nearly perfect echo of her 2009 piece on Nelly Arcan's autofictional work just after the author's death ("On était dans la littérature, dans l'écriture, d'abord et avant tout" (Laurin 2009)). In both pieces there is a pre-

emptive defense of the work as literature as if the critic assumes there will be some who will consider it otherwise. Two years later, upon the posthumous release of Gendreau's *Drama Queens*, Laurin has a slightly different perspective, if self-consciously so: "J'aurais aimé lire *Drama Queens* sans rien connaître de l'auteure, de sa vie, de sa mort. Mais c'est impossible. Le livre va tellement de pair avec la fille qui l'a écrit, avec sa vie, avec sa mort" (Laurin 2014).

Wilhelmy has suggested that the critics' focus on Gendreau's life is due to the difficult nature of the text:

La qualité littéraire de l'ouvrage n'estompe cependant pas l'hermétisme occasionné par la structure polyphonique du texte, et le roman demeure difficilement accessible à un lectorat autre qu'intellectuel ou littéraire. Vickie Gendreau ne nous offre pas une autobiographie larmoyante ou un récit «facile» de sa maladie. Au contraire, sa prose est impitoyable, dure et laborieuse. Impossible, donc, de qualifier son livre de roman «grand public» (Wilhelmy 2013).

While it is certainly literature (and need not even be defended as such), *Testament* is a challenging work on the levels of both form and style, the fragmented, polyphonic nature of the text and its occasionally dense or opaque prose, and more broadly, in the questions that arise in the reading of autofictional work – how to take such work on its own terms as literature, how much to let what is known of the facts and events of the author's life colour the reading and interpretation of the text, as well as, for my purposes, its translation.

Despite the extraordinary circumstances of its writing and publication and its positive reception, *Testament* received little attention in English-language media in Montreal. I myself wrote the only English-language review of the text that I have been able to find, and although her death was covered on Radio-Canada and in the French-language Montreal newspapers, it wasn't mentioned on CBC or in the English-language *Montreal Gazette*. Due to this lack of coverage, it is likely that Gendreau and her work remain mostly unknown to an Anglophone Canadian audience.

Traditions of the testament, autofiction, and (anti)elegy

Gendreau self-consciously alludes to the forms and traditions she draws upon for *Testament*. The chapters begin with testamentary language: “À Antoine, mon frère, je lègue...” (Gendreau 2012, 111). “Vickie” bequeaths objects both real and imagined to family and friends and acquaintances: a *Terminator* cigarette case is left to her brother, a borrowed babydoll dress is willed back to its owner, a piano-playing cat to her unrequited love, hundreds of fennec foxes to everyone and, most importantly, the texts which make up part of each chapter, which are delivered via USB keys to each of her beneficiaries.

This irreverent testament follows François Villon’s *Le Testament*, the fifteenth century French poet’s long poem that delivers a fictional testament in which Villon leaves possessions he doesn’t own to people he doesn’t know, taking revenge on his enemies by bequeathing them suffering, writing as if he was facing death by hanging.

David Fein, writing on *Le Testament*, observes that Villon’s playful approach to the legal terminology of the testament “loosens and reinvigorates a normally rigid and lifeless form of language” (Fein 1984, 69). Villon’s poem takes the reader forward, toward the speaker’s death, while at the same time bringing them along into his past. The structure of Gendreau’s narrative also allows her to take us in both directions at once: the voices of her friends and family thrust us into a future in which “Vickie” has already died, while the texts she’s left them take place in a present moment in which she’s ill and looking back on her life and the roles they played in it.

Fein notes that by referring to himself in the third person,

Villon separates himself into the observer and the observed, the *je* and the *il*, one deceased and one who continues to live. In so doing, he has in a sense managed to outlive

himself, conquering death. At the same time, the voice of the eulogy, speaking for the now voiceless martyr, comes to us in effect from the other side of the grave. Even before he has died, Villon is already addressing us from the realm of the dead (78).

Gendreau, in writing herself as both the *je* and the *elle*, the observer and the observed, invokes this aspect of Villon's structure and her referencing of his name several times in the novel suggests she does so consciously. Gendreau's testament also bears some stylistic similarities to Villon's. Justin Clemens notes that Villon's poem is "full of multilingual puns and reworkings of current clichés" (Clemens 2013, 8) – Gendreau's style too makes use of current slang in a straightforward manner as well as re-appropriating it to her own ends, and she frequently plays with common idioms and makes free use of English words and phrases. Her *Testament*, playful in both form and style, can be seen as a response to the existing tradition of Villon's and other such irreverent testaments.

Gendreau is thus aware of the traditions in which she's writing, referring throughout the book to Villon as well as to the late Québécois(e)s writers Marie Uguay and Hubert Aquin: "MAMAN: Hubert Aquin se fait un thé. Marie Uguay enfile son tutu. François Villon, un smoking. J'ignore qui sont ces gens mais ma fille dit qu'ils sont importants" (Gendreau 2012, 106). The parallels to Uguay, a Québécoise poet who died of bone cancer in 1981 at the age of 26, are obvious and Gendreau makes them for us, referring to herself as "Marie Uguay en tutu" (123). Uguay published two books of poetry before her death; her third, *Autoportraits*, was released posthumously in 1982. Her writing life, like Gendreau's, was marked by the urgency of fatal illness, of limited time remaining. As Stephan Kovacs, the editor of her journal and her former partner, writes:

Alors qu'elle est menacée dans son corps, deux pôles contradictoires s'affrontent, l'un vers lequel elle est entraînée malgré elle: la mort; l'autre vers lequel elle tend: la poésie, le désir, la vie (les trois ne faisant plus qu'un, n'ayant qu'un seul sens) (Kovacs 2006, 10).

Gendreau, too, described the tension between her need to write and the illness preventing her from doing so, from writing through her treatments, from having enough time to finish the ten books she'd vowed to write:

Je vais continuer à écrire, c'est tout ce que je sais. Je vais toujours utiliser la littérature comme une bouée. Mais je n'écris presque plus présentement parce que je suis en transition de médicaments. [...] Je me rends compte que la seule chose qu'il me reste, c'est la littérature, et l'amitié (Gendreau in Guy, 2012).

Gendreau spoke frankly in interviews about wanting to not be forgotten after her death, her novel being one way to ensure she is remembered. Uguay's career was brief but she quickly became part of the canon of Québec literature. Her journals were published in 2005, suggesting that interest in her life and work has not waned in the years since her death.

Gendreau also makes several references to Hubert Aquin, another Québec writer whose death is also now an inextricable part of his story. A novelist and journalist, fiercely political and separatist, Aquin committed suicide in 1977. He is best known for the four novels he published between 1965 and 1974, though he was also the author of many essays, articles, short stories, plays and scripts for television, radio and film (Purdy 1988, xiii). Death was one of Aquin's obsessions, and a frequent subject of his work. As Bernard Beugnot notes in his introduction to Aquin's novel *L'Invention de la mort*, written in 1959 but not published until 1990: "[s]'y retrouve aussi le rapport obsessionnel à la mort qui a, dès son jeune âge, marqué Aquin" (Beugnot 1991, 8). Aquin's life has little in common with Gendreau's with the exception of this shared subject matter, though they even come to this by different means: in his case, an ongoing fascination or preoccupation with death crept into much of his work throughout his life, while for Gendreau, it is a subject unexpectedly thrust upon her.

An important precedent for Gendreau's novel as autofiction in the face of death is the work of Hervé Guibert, specifically his novels written after his diagnosis with AIDS in the early nineties. In *À l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* (1990), *Le protocole compassionnel* (1991) and *L'homme au chapeau rouge* (1992), Guibert wrote of his diagnosis, his attempts to get into new drug trials, and, perhaps most importantly, the daily life of someone living with AIDS at a time when it was becoming very prevalent and yet still much misunderstood.

There is a strong tradition of autofiction in French-language literature and Guibert's use of the genre to write through and of his own illness and death is one emulated by Gendreau.

Patricia Smart has defined autofiction as follows in her recent work on the genre:

Inventé en 1977 par Serge Doubrovsky, le terme autofiction se réfère à une catégorie d'œuvres proches du roman autobiographique, mais qui affichent l'indécidabilité de leur statut générique: ni romans, ni autobiographies, elles sont un mélange des deux, jouissant du dilemme qu'elles jettent à la face du lecteur qui y chercherait les signes du pacte garantissant la vérité et la référentialité du texte (Smart 2014, 370).

Shirley Jordan notes that autofiction "has been central to the proliferation of self-narrative experiment in France for over thirty years" (Jordan 2012, 76). Arising out of debates about the 'impossibility' of the traditional autobiography, autofictional narratives disregard or even break down generic boundaries (76). For Guibert and Gendreau and others who have turned to autofiction to write their impending deaths, the strictures of traditional autobiography doubtless seemed even more impossible.

Writing about two autofictional *récits* by Québec poets Denise Desautels and Paul Chanel Malenfant, both of which deal with illness, death and grief, Barbara Havercroft suggests that the autofictional mode can be used as a way to regain agency in the face of grief: "l'espace de l'écriture du deuil s'avère celui où le sujet blessé devient aussi agent, agissant sur sa vie dans ce geste performatif d'écriture" (Havercroft 2002, 63). We can extend Havercroft's statement to say

that this mode allows the writer to regain a kind of agency in the face of their own illness and death as well, and that this, in part, was the goal of Guibert's autofictional project and of Gendreau's. Writing through her treatments, writing her own death in advance, her own elegies or anti-elegies, Gendreau uses the autofictional form to gain back in writing some of the agency that becomes lost in the cycle of dehumanizing treatments and in occupying the position of "patient."

Shirley Jordan claims that a distinct phase in autofictional writing by women is underway in French-language literature, "one that is remarkable for the extraordinarily difficult material it explores, for the sophisticated channels of self-apprehension it furrows, and for its fertile repositionings of the 'I'" (Jordan 2012, 77). She notes a "privileged connection" between autofiction by women and trauma – "How does combining fact and fictional material allow practitioners to respond to rape, incest, violence, illness, and death?" (80). There is a broad range of autofictional practices by women writers, from Chloé Delaume to Régine Robin to Annie Ernaux, among many others, which Jordan describes as a spectrum in need of charting (80). Common, however, to all of these female autofictional projects is an "I" that is at some remove. As Jordan notes, the impact of these projects or experiments "derives in part from their authors' owning of excessive, sometimes violent, experiences, which are the more readily explored through autofictional distancing" (79). Gendreau's use of multiple voices, of texts within a text, allows her to create this distancing, the space required for a narrative that performs both her death and her testament.

An autofiction in the face of death has a particular urgency, here reflected in both content and form. Occasional phrases or sections that are puzzling or unclear to the reader feel like references or jokes we're not privy to, or snippets of past conversations for which we don't necessarily have

context. The occasionally frenetic nature of the text, and these moments of opacity, feel like the result of working with one eye on a clock ticking too loudly – if this is to be both the first and the last book, it has to say it all. The testament, by its very nature, is a text written for and even directly addressing a small audience well known to its writer (Benedikt 1998). Here we have a testament that is shared far beyond its named “beneficiaries” to a wider reading public and thus becomes almost two texts: the one read by those who knew the author, and the one read by those encountering the book itself first.

Another precedent to Gendreau’s project, and more specifically her use of a kind of elegy, is found in the work of Catherine Mavrikakis. Whereas the elegy is generally a poetic form that expresses sorrow and loss and lamentation for the dead, Mavrikakis’s novel *Deuils cannibales et mélancoliques* (2000) is a text of grief and what we might call anti-elegy, full of anger and bewilderment as the narrator reflects on the death of Hervé Guibert and of all the other “Hervés” in her life who are dying, many from AIDS. Mavrikakis’ text is less a straightforward elegy than it is a challenge to the form – refusing the acceptance expected to follow grief and confronting instead the rage and fear she feels in the face of so much death. Gendreau’s elegiac sections, in which her friends and family remember her and react to her death, reflect this kind of resistance to accepted narratives of grief and mourning. The people in her life are angry or bewildered or detached, confused by her death and by the texts she’s left for them. The sections in their voices display the emotional range of their reactions:

STANISLAS: Tu ne fais meow pour personne maintenant. Je n’en ai rien à foutre de ton journal intime.doc. J’ai envie de réagir.doc mais je le ferai pas. Je vais te critiquer. Je vais te dire ce que tu es vraiment et tout le monde va m’écouter parce que je suis encore en vie, moi. Tu dis que tu es personne et tout le monde en même temps pour faire cute, mais en réalité tu n’es rien. Tu es du pus, c’est ça que tu es. (Gendreau 2012, 57).

CATHERINE: Elle savait qu'elle allait mourir. Elle n'a rien dit. On ne l'aurait pas écoutée. Better safe than sorry, fille. Tu aurais dû dire quelque chose. On aurait bu du vin ensemble et on en aurait parlé. Je t'aurais flatté les cheveux (84).

MAMAN: Je n'ai rien compris au livre de Vickie. Son ami Mathieu va m'aider à extraire le sens de ce document. Ce livre, il est censé être pour tout le monde. Je suis personne et tout le monde en même temps (108).

Melissa F. Zeiger discusses two historical models of elegy: the first an “anxiety-of-influence model” derived from the work of Harold Bloom, and the second a “work-of-mourning model based on Freud’s ‘Mourning and Melancholia’” (Zeiger 1997, 3). This first model sees the elegy as a “rivalrous attack on a dead but still overwhelming precursor figure,” while the second considers the elegy as a “translation into literature of the grieving process following a death, leading to resignation or consolation” (3).

Zeiger notes that the poetic elegy was historically the domain of male writers, pointing to discussions of the genre by scholars such as Louise O. Fradenburg, Celeste Schenck and Juliana Schiesari, who have written about the elegy as “a site of male bonding, power production, and authorial self-identification,” drawing attention to its “privileging of male melancholia and concomitant appropriation of mourning by a melancholic male poet and cultural hero” (5).

Zeiger discusses how women’s elegies have been “important pioneering ones for other elegiac genres, notably AIDS and breast cancer elegies” (63), citing Schenck’s argument that women’s elegies tend to “reject a career-driven, masculinist model in which the dead are to be overcome, displaced and distanced, and in which the main goal of elegy is poetic inheritance” (63).

Contemporary women’s elegies, according to Zeiger, have disrupted the form’s “traditional conventions and methods” (67), and both women’s elegies and AIDS and breast cancer elegies have taken the tropes and conventions of the form and deliberately revised them, to make space for themselves in a traditionally masculine form, to write themselves into the cultural narrative

(106). Mavrikakis, with her fierce challenge to the resolution or resignation of the form, has carved out new space for women-authored elegies, space into which narratives such as Gendreau's now follow.

Testament in English

Though the context I have traced thus far for *Testament* has focused on French-language texts, there is a clear place for this kind of work in contemporary English-language literature as well, particularly that written by women.

Women writing and documenting their diagnoses and treatments for cancer as well as other serious illness have done so across the boundaries of both genre and media, just as Shirley Jordan has noted of women's autofictional work in general (Jordan 81, 2012). Work addressing illness and impending death makes use of photography and film as well as a range of written contexts: serial diaries in both print and online magazines, short articles and full length works of poetry. British artist Jo Spence documents her breast cancer in photographs and writings in *Putting Myself in the Picture* (1986). Canadian filmmaker Esther Valiquette's short film *Le Singe Bleu* (1992) interweaves the autobiographical story of her diagnosis with AIDS with the story of the collapse of the Minoan civilization. British writer Jenny Diski began chronicling her inoperable cancer diagnosis and treatment in the *London Review of Books* in late 2014, all the while refusing the label 'confessional': "We'd hardly got home before I said: 'Well, I suppose I'm going to write a cancer diary.' The only other thing I might have said was: 'Well, I'm not going to write a cancer diary.'" (Diski 2014, 7). Diski calls it a diary but acknowledges an approach that doesn't always cling to facts alone:

I may not make things up in fiction, or tell the truth in non-fiction, but documentary or invented, it's always been me at the centre of the will to put descriptions out into the world. I lie like all writers but I use my truths as I know them in order to do so (7).

Her approach to the 'cancer diary' is sharp and unsentimental; she is aware of the clichés inherent in the subject matter and aware too that some of them are simply unavoidable. She presents her cancer narrative as a serialized diary, citing other cancer memoirs as well as Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor*.

The American poet Anne Boyer has also written about her ongoing treatments for cancer. Her 2014 essay "The Sororal Death" invokes the many women writers who've died of breast cancer and explores the forms in which they wrote about it, whether explicitly referring to their own diagnoses, as in Audre Lorde's *The Marvelous Arithmetics of Distance* and Kathy Acker's uncharacteristically direct essay "The Gift of Disease," or without bringing in their personal experiences, as in Sontag's and Rachel Carson's work. To write of breast cancer is to be a part of this legion of "women dying of being women," and has become practically obligatory, Boyer writes.

The sororal death is not without some sacrifice. At least in the age of "awareness," that lucrative, pink-ribbon wrapped alternative to "cure," women might not give up their lives for each other, but they do give up our breast cancer stories for the perceived common good. Reluctance to link one's self to the disease, once typical of the silence around breast cancer, has been replaced with an obligation to always do so (Boyer 2014).

Gendreau, though a young woman with an inoperable, fatal form of cancer, is left out of this narrative tradition in which it is perceived as a responsibility to talk or to write about her disease, to present a brave face and a positive spin. Melissa F. Zeiger devotes a full chapter of her work on elegy to the phenomenon of the "breast cancer elegy" and the unique forms it has taken. The American poet Audre Lorde's last book is one such work of elegy re-appropriated. Zeiger notes that in *The Marvelous Arithmetics of Distance*, Lorde explores and describes her process of

“coming to terms” with her own approaching death from breast cancer “explicitly, intensively, and with painstaking deliberateness” (Zeiger 1997, 152). Gendreau’s work is not quite resolved with a “coming to terms” with her approaching death – *Testament* is more confrontation than resolution – but she makes both the elegy form and the cancer narrative her own.

Beyond the English-language traditions of elegy and the cancer narrative, *Testament* also resonates within a broader context of contemporary feminist literature exploring subjectivity and experimenting with first-person narrative and the “confessional,” texts which combine elements of fiction and autobiography. Canadian writer Sheila Heti’s recent autofictional *How Should A Person Be?* (2010), subtitled “A novel from life,” is an example, as well as Lynn Crosbie’s *Life is About Losing Everything* (2012), and the work of American writers Chris Kraus, Dodie Bellamy, Ann Rower, and Suzanne Scanlon, among others. Kraus, as the author of novels that combine autobiography, theory, art criticism and fiction, and as one of the editors of *Semiotext(e)*’s Native Agents series, has written extensively about the female “I” – its possibilities, its reception. In her 2004 essay collection *Video Green*, she writes,

I think that “privacy” is to contemporary female art what “obscenity” was to male art and literature of the 1960s. The willingness of someone to use her life as primary material is still deeply disturbing, and even more so if she views her own experience at some remove. There is no problem with female confession providing it is made within a repentant therapeutic narrative. But to examine things coolly, to thrust experience out of one’s own brain and put it on the table, is still too confrontational (Kraus 2004, 63).

The “remove” Kraus speaks of is of course quite close to the autofictional distancing Shirley Jordan references, that distance which makes possible the insights and the impact of autofictional narratives, particularly those addressing difficult or traumatic subject matter and doing so irreverently, unrepentantly, or outside of a ‘therapeutic narrative.’ Gendreau’s narrative was met with less suspicion than Kraus’ oeuvre has provoked, despite her free use of her own life, the mingling of fact and fiction, and the audacity of speaking through the voices of the people in her

life. This could be a difference in how the autofictional tradition is received by French-language readers, though Shirley Jordan has noted that “women’s work has borne the brunt of misgivings about autofiction’s legitimacy” (Jordan 2012, 77) in French-language literature too. This reception could also have to do with the fact that she is writing her own death through and alongside other subjects often deemed frivolous or un-literary when taken up by female writers: her friendships, her love life, her outfits, and her job at a strip club.

Gendreau was still living when *Testament* was published, and discussions of the book were very much focused on her life, her then still ongoing illness. While her real life will inevitably be linked to that which she recounts in her novel, the text in English would possibly reach its audience ahead of, or at the same time as, Gendreau’s personal story. This, of course, depends in part on the way the book is marketed by publishers and also on the work of journalists and critics and their approaches to the book. But options for coverage of the work are already rather more limited than those available to French-language media at the time of the novel’s release, as interviews and profile pieces are no longer possible. Upon the novel’s initial release, Gendreau herself could speak to it, a young woman imagining and anticipating her own death, beating would-be eulogists to the punch. The context into which an English translation of the novel will be released is different – the author can no longer speak to her testament, but this may also give it a different space or context in which to be read as a literary work.

Translation challenges

Gendreau's style is immediately distinctive. Her narrative voice is by turns earnest, irreverent, bored, angry, and playful. She moves easily between slang, English words and phrases, puns and plays on words, and more poetic, literary tones. The style is one of the great strengths of the work, and poses many challenges to a translator, including how to address cultural references, the use of English, wordplay and puns, and issues of gender in translation.

Testament is filled with references to literary figures, musicians and films, some of which may be recognizable to Anglophone readers, others less so. Gendreau's references to Aquin, Uguay and Villon are a recurring example:

MAMAN: Hubert Aquin se fait un thé. Marie Uguay enfile son tutu. François Villon, un smoking. J'ignore qui sont ces gens mais ma fille dit qu'ils sont importants. Je les habille. Ils m'accompagnent, je m'en vais me faire bronzer (Gendreau 2012, 106).

These references to French-language writers will probably be lost on the Anglophone reader.

What does this mean for the novel in English? It is not as if the plot hinges on these references, but without any knowledge of why Gendreau is invoking these names and what they represent, they become puzzling or simply clutter to be ignored.

Other cultural references less meaningful to the narrative as a whole include the names of musicians and actors and films, some of which are likely recognizable to the Anglophone reader, like Jim Jarmusch (17) and Ryan Gosling (75), while others are less so, as in the following passage. "Je me dis qu'à tout moment l'Appendice Dominic Montplaisir et sa copine pourraient entrer pour m'annoncer qu'ils vont nommer leur enfant Amandine Montplaisir. Amender son plaisir, c'est hot, c'est poétique" (17). Les Appendices are a Francophone comedy group from Montreal, and thus a name that will in all likelihood be unknown to Anglophone readers. Yet the play on Montplaisir's name makes this more complex than a simple off-hand reference.

Michael Henry Heim has written about the challenges of dealing with historical or cultural references in the source text, maintaining that the translator can take cues from the text itself regarding what approaches to take, and that these approaches must necessarily vary. Heim takes up the notion of the two approaches to translating first discussed by Friedrich Schleiermacher, which he described as the “only two possibilities” for the translator wishing to bring the writer and reader together: “Either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him” (Schleiermacher 2004, 49). Ideas of ‘foreignizing’ versus ‘domesticating’ translation strategies were later discussed and elaborated upon by Antoine Berman (1985) and Lawrence Venuti (1995, 1998.) Despite Schleiermacher’s warning that any attempt to combine these two “paths” will produce a “highly unreliable result” (49), Heim suggests that translators should regard the apparently opposing approaches of domestication versus foreignization as two ends of a spectrum rather than a binary (Heim 2013, 84). In fact, he notes that this is most often already the approach of practicing translators, who “instinctively avoid relying for their sentence-by-sentence choices exclusively on one or another end of the spectrum” (84), as opposed to theoreticians who may fiercely defend one approach over another.

Heim suggests that literary references pose a challenge similar to that of historical references, as the writer takes for granted that readers in the source culture will have a context for the works or figures referenced (86). Further, “[a]ny works or authors that a serious writer cites will have a metaphoric resonance for the source culture, whereas for the target culture they may be just so many disembodied titles or names” (86). To illustrate how no single approach can be applied to all the references within a text, Heim gives examples from his own translation work of instances in which a slightly ‘domesticating’ approach worked best, and others in which a ‘foreignizing’

touch would best preserve the spirit of the text in that moment. None of the approaches Heim describes involve translator's footnotes; he claims that "footnotes, unless intentionally inserted by the author (in which case they constitute an integral part of the text), distract the reader from the narrative flow" (85). Instead, he suggests an experiment a translator might perform on texts to which they've added an explanatory word or two in order to help the target audience understand, to bring them closer to the source text.

When supplementing the text to clarify differences in everyday life [...], or to insert bits of historical and literary information [...], translators can perform a small experiment to ensure that their modified text does not deform the original. If they translate the modified text and insert it into the original, it must ring true: the explanation must not sound like an explanation of a phenomenon that members of the source culture take for granted (88).

Heim is primarily drawing on his experience translating from German for a North American Anglophone audience. But the translation of cultural references can still be a significant challenge when it comes to translating within Canada. In a 2015 interview on his translation into French of Montreal writer Anna Leventhal's *Sweet Affliction* (2014), Daniel Grenier explained his own somewhat unconventional approach to dealing with cultural references, particularly musicians and television shows. In attempts to preserve the humour in Leventhal's stories, he frequently replaced her references with specifically Québécois cultural references. In a passage about a mix tape, for example, he replaced Leventhal's reference to a song by a band called The Brooks with an Éric Lapointe song (Strauss 2015). Grenier admits that this means he has Anglo-Montrealers listening to a Québécois rock musician, but felt it was necessary in order to make the joke work. "My feeling is that in *Sweet Affliction*, while it's true that a lot of the characters are anglo Montrealers, there's a sort of Québec vibe... shared references" (Grenier in Strauss, 2015). He goes on to explain that there is a precedent for this kind of bold translating into Québec French, referencing dubbed films like *Slap Shot* and episodes of *The Simpsons* that were translated specifically for Québec audiences, regardless of their setting (Strauss 2015).

While Grenier is translating into French, some similar challenges with regards to cultural references arise when translating a work set in Montreal into English. Gendreau's references to the filmmaker Xavier Dolan and the musician Grimes, both well-known Montreal figures, are examples of these "shared references" that Grenier notes and thus pose no difficulty in translation. However, while Québec audiences are likely to be familiar with English-language pop stars and films, the inverse is less true, with the exception of these shared, generally Montreal-centric references. Most of the films Gendreau mentions are English-language American films, some of which she glosses for the reader herself: "*Storytelling*, le film de Solondz" (Gendreau 2012, 96). Much of the music, too, would be known to the Anglophone reader. The question remains how to approach the rest, references that may bewilder readers in the target audience. Grenier acknowledges that he wouldn't necessarily feel as free to substitute references in translating any work but that it seemed like an appropriate approach for Leventhal's short stories. He was also able to consult her throughout his translation process. Gendreau's autofiction, however, necessitates a different approach.

I have not changed any of the references in the text, nor have I used footnotes, for similar reasons as those cited by Heim above. Instead I have added a supplementary word or two in some instances, where I felt a slight clarification would help and where it could fit fluidly into the text. However, I have also tried to refrain from explaining too much – some of these references wouldn't be common knowledge to all Francophone readers either. For example, a Québec reader would likely have heard of Uguay and Aquin, but Villon is possibly a more obscure reference for many readers, with the exception of those who have had formal exposure to French literature. In translating the above example referencing Uguay, Aquin and Villon, I supplemented the text only to point out that they are in fact writers:

MAMAN: Hubert Aquin makes himself a tea. Marie Uguay puts on her tutu. François Villon, a tuxedo. I don't know who these people are but my daughter says they're important writers. I get them dressed. They're coming with me, I'm going tanning.

Beyond that, these names in the English text can carry significance for those who recognize the references, and for the curious reader who may not, further information is easily accessible.

Other cultural references that are specific to Québec also remain in place in the translation:

references to Éric Lapointe, *Les Appendices*, Ginette Reno, etc. In the above example referencing one of the members of *Les Appendices*, I kept both the reference and the play on his name, inserting the fact that he's a comedian and glossing the wordplay for the Anglophone reader:

At any moment now one of comedians from *Les Appendices*, Dominic Montplaisir, and his girlfriend could show up to tell me that they're going to name their baby Amandine Montplaisir. Amender son plaisir, enhance your pleasure, I think that's hot, it's poetic.

This decision to keep all of these literary and cultural references in place is based on the fact that while Gendreau's narrative mixes fiction and fact, the fiction is still rooted in her own life, and the references thus feel like her own personal references. Gendreau brings these cultural figures and works into her narrative out of a somewhat different impulse than that of an author introducing such references into a fictional story in order to give historical or cultural context, or to aid in characterization. The eclectic mix of American films, Québec comedy, electronic music and fifteenth century French poetry referenced throughout *Testament* is Gendreau's own mix of interests and influences, her own "personal canon," and as such I feel it is important to preserve them. The references to Québec culture and literature also situate the narrator and her story in her Francophone Montreal world. It would be a kind of erasure to eliminate or replace these markers of her taste and influences and cultural surroundings. Finally, I feel that to read autofiction is to

enter into the world and the worldview of someone else, including their cultural world, and the reader thus accepts a certain challenge in doing so.

Gendreau's French is marked by English throughout *Testament* — words and colloquialisms and parts of phrases appear in English. This poses a challenge in translating the text into English, particularly for a translator concerned with preserving the texture created by these moments of linguistic hybridity. Canadian literary translators and translation scholars have written much about the challenges of translating Québec French deliberately marked by English words. As Kathy Mezei writes,

In many texts, the use of English is political. The author, through language – joul, English colloquialisms or expressions – is demonstrating the colonized, diglossic situation of Québec, linguistically highlighting her degradation or simply the hard realities of the cultural context (Mezei 1995, 139).

In an article first published in 1988, Mezei questions whether or not translators are “speaking white” or contributing to the assimilation of Québec by English Canada by the “recurring non-translation, or mis-translation of English from the original French-language texts” (135). She notes that many English translations of Québec texts at the time “participated in a subtle subversion of Québec culture” (136) by rarely acknowledging in the target text the source text's use of English. “Yet,” she remarks, “for the author of the original text, this English usage was intended as a highly symbolic signifier” (136). “Speaking white” is, of course, a reference to Michèle Lalonde's 1968 poster-poem “Speak white,” a bilingual text intended to criticize the bilingualism of Québec at the time and to call attention to the detrimental consequences for Francophone Québécois of the powerful position of English.

The interjections of English [in Lalonde's poem] are a reminder of the subordinate social and economic position of the Québécois and their alienation from power. Assuming a bilingual audience who will understand these references, they call attention to the

enforced and unequal bilingualism of the Québécois, who in order to survive, economically, had to speak white. Indeed, ‘Speak White’ participates in a long tradition of Québécois writers interspersing English throughout their texts in order to make a deliberate political or social statement (Mezei 1998, 234).

In the Québec of 1968, there was a neater alignment of linguistic divisions with class divisions: English was synonymous with the economic oppression of the Québécois by an Anglophone workforce occupying most of the managerial positions. Today, nearly forty years after the implementation of Bill 101 and the “francization” of the workplace, the economic reality of Québec is very different than it was at the time of Lalonde’s writing. Further, as Mezei notes, “[g]iven Québec’s multicultural and allophone context, the slogan (to use Lalonde’s term) ‘speak white’ is problematic. From whose position does one speak white? Who speaks, who is silenced?” (242). It is difficult to fit this slogan into a multicultural, contemporary Québec in which reports of language discrimination now more often come from immigrant communities who have struggled to find or keep jobs as speakers of French as a second language (Authier 2015). The notion, thus, of “speaking white” as put forth by Lalonde in 1968 is of a particular historical moment and cannot be imported wholesale to discuss choices made by writers and translators in today’s Québec.

Mezei suggests that in contemporary Québec, we might reinterpret the use of English by Francophone authors as “subversive and as an assertion of agency” (Mezei 1998, 243). She points to works such as Nicole Brossard’s *le désert mauve* (1987) and Jacques Poulin’s *Volkswagon Blues* (1984) as examples of texts that use English to this effect, as opposed to its earlier uses by Québec authors to symbolize and highlight oppression and disenfranchisement. Mezei, writing in 1998, claims that “[i]n contemporary Québec, diglossia, code-switching and the hybridization of language are perceived as potentially creative. The power play of a ludic bilingualism, of switching language codes, is now in the hands of francophones” (243).

Gendreau's reference to the 1970 *Nuit de la poésie* suggests she is familiar with the precedents set by Lalonde and others of the era:

Je pense au preneur de son des *Archives de l'âme*,
le documentaire sur la *Nuit de la poésie* de 1970.
J'ai pensé à lui plusieurs fois cette semaine.
J'aime m'imaginer sa voix.
Sa vie à capter la voix des autres avec des micros
défectueux (Gendreau 2012, 149).

And yet, it seems clear from her text that her use of English likely comes more from the impulse of subversion and play and the creative potential of diglossia as described by Mezei, rather than an uncomplicated hearkening back to the politicized use of English by Lalonde's generation.

The language of *Testament* is thus illustrative of a younger generation's relation to English, one that is playful, casual, flippant, and, at times, appropriative. Gendreau's code-switching on the whole seems to belong to what Mezei calls "the Quebecois' active appropriation of English" as opposed to earlier generations' "passive translation by the other" (Mezei 1998, 243). Gendreau uses English like just another tool, and her narrative includes English in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons, many poetic or stylistic, as in the following passage:

We are enfants terrible. We are fils absents. We are du même nom de famille plate. We are histoire plate. We are même pas dignes de mention. We are quand même dans ta playlist. We are pas loin de plein d'autres noms importants. We are passés à côté. We are pas pleins de pentes douces. We are abrupts. We are Rocky Road. We are ice cream and we get eaten. We get swallowed and then we spin. We are yet to be announced. We are the enfants of the revolution. We are même pas nés au complet. We are aussi morts que vivants. We marcher en ligne droit. We tomber de haut. We never conquered. We failed (Gendreau 2012, 86).

Elsewhere in the text, the appearance of English seems simply to reflect the speech patterns of young Francophones using it for emphasis or humour: "J'ai rencontré ce garçon il y a deux semaines. C'est voué à l'échec, je déménage à Ottawa. Je lui offre quand même un biscuit. Just one bite. It's enough. Believe me. Ceux-ci, c'est impossible d'y résister. Mais essaye. Just one"

(154). Finally, English is occasionally used self-consciously, the speaker of the passage referencing his or her own usage of it: “Vickie est entrée dans la pièce dripping in gold. Dripping in, oui, c’est du British slang” (147).

English is not spoken by any one Anglophone character in the novel; it does not serve as an indicator of class or power (or the mocking or subversion thereof) on the part of its speaker. English words mostly occur sparingly and quickly in the text, a “Done, bye” (100) to conclude a section entirely in French, a quipped “Never mind” (89). When English is used at greater length or with greater frequency, it serves as a poetic or stylistic device in the passage in question. (Although there is certainly a stylized aspect, a rhythmic punch, to the shorter phrases or single words as well.) Gendreau has not used italics to set apart these English words, which gives the impression that they are a part of her language rather than an exotic import or a pointed dig. Gendreau’s use of English demonstrates the stylistic possibilities of a linguistically hybrid text as well as presenting a contemporary spoken French that includes the playful appropriation of aspects of another language that is very much a part of the city she lived and wrote in.

The English in the text, however, still poses a challenge to the translator wishing to preserve some of the hybridity and texture of her language. Strategies that have been used in the past by translators of Québec literature such as Betty Bednarski and Ray Ellenwood include setting words off in italics or, in the case of dialogue, glossing within the text: “...she said in English” (Bednarski 1995, 112). In the case of *Testament* the best strategy is one that points to Gendreau’s use of English without disrupting the text or placing undue significance on an aspect of her style that was not meant to be weighted with political import.

If we consider Gendreau's style and use of English as part of a larger reflection of a local dialect, a particular spoken French of a particular generation, the question of how to deal with this dialect or style as a whole emerges. Suzanne Jill Levine, writing on the challenges of translating Cuban Spanish into American English, addresses this issue:

Should the translator supplant one local dialect with another? Or somehow suggest the vividness of the original "Cuban" through a composite of spoken accents from American English? Every translator has a personal version of what a particular slang sounds like, and of which slang is a more appropriate substitution (Levine 1991, 67).

Levine, for her part, translated Guillermo Cabrera Infante's Cuban Spanish into a "simulacrum of the particular accents and vocabulary of southern Black Americans" (68). It is worth noting, however, that Levine was closely collaborating with Infante on this translation. As Madeleine Stratford has pointed out, Levine's translations of the poetry of Alejandra Pizarnik show rather different strategies, in part perhaps because Levine couldn't collaborate with the late Pizarnik (Stratford 2006, 89). It is a particularity of the English translation of *Testament* that Gendreau's style and her French are very much contemporary and yet I cannot discuss the translation with her.

Ray Ellenwood has also written about the challenges of translating regionally specific language. In an article on his translation of Jacques Ferron's *Le Ciel du Québec*, Ellenwood describes "two basic, incompatible tendencies" in approaching such linguistic "local colour":

1. To transpose as completely as possible the original text, seeking an equivalent for everything.
2. To make the translation declare itself as such, leaving plenty of evidence of the original text and probably including phrases in the source language, perhaps giving explanations within the translated text, or in footnotes (Ellenwood 1995, 104).

Ellenwood himself opted for the second of these options with his translation of Ferron, citing the narrative's focus on linguistic and cultural identity as his reason for doing what he can "*not to assimilate the work too smoothly into English*" (106). Both Ellenwood and Kathy Mezei discuss

a translation by David Homel that takes the other approach, more similar to Levine's. Homel's translation of Jacques Renaud's *Le Cassé* translates the joul of the text (one of the first to be written entirely in joul) by transposing it entirely into the slang of Chicago, Homel's native city (104). Mezei describes Homel's choice as one of "equivalence," choosing to emphasize the English reader's accessibility to the target text (Mezei 1988, 140).

As Levine notes, every translator has their own version of what a particular slang or regionally specific language sounds like, a subjective interpretation influenced no doubt by their own linguistic experiences. The English I first spoke in my childhood in Newfoundland is one almost as regionally specific as the French of Québec, and often what felt to me like the best equivalents to Gendreau's irreverent and colourful language and slang were words more specific to the Newfoundland vernacular. In contrast, a more standard Canadian English seemed to offer somewhat less in the way of expressiveness. Unlike the setting of Infante's work, which led Levine to search for an American dialect to match the Cuban, the city of Gendreau's novel is already home to its own particular English (or rather, as linguists like Charles Boberg have pointed out, several quite distinct Englishes (Boberg 2014, 63)) just as much as a particular French and there are some narratives for which finding an equivalent in a regionally specific English would be an interesting approach. Yet, as with the challenges of cultural references, to entirely supplant a "Montreal French" with a "Montreal English" is inappropriate for this kind of narrative, and the visibility of the translation as such is fitting given that Gendreau makes it clear she is writing in French throughout the novel: "C'est désolant, navrant, follement difficile de se voir opérer cette machinerie lourde qu'est la langue française avec des mains pleines de pouces" (Gendreau 2012, 83). I thus decided against translating Gendreau's "Montreal French" with an

equivalent regionally specific English, whether a Montreal English or a vernacular Newfoundland English.

I have taken an approach that follows Ellenwood's rather than Levine's or Homel's – allowing the translation to “declare itself as such” and keeping it rooted in Gendreau's Francophone Montreal. Ellenwood made this decision based on the importance of linguistic and cultural identity to the narrative he was translating. In the case of the autofictional *Testament*, the text is more focused on the personal, but it still has a linguistic identity that is important to preserve.

The challenge in rendering Gendreau's French into an English that does justice to the texture and play of her language is in part how to signal the occasionally hybrid nature of the French spoken in Montreal. English-language novels set in Montreal, in which we are meant to understand the characters to be speaking French, provide interesting examples of how to signify the mingling of French and English in the city. Heather O'Neill's novel *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (2014) features two young Montrealers growing up on Boulevard St-Laurent in the 1990s. It is made clear that the characters are speaking French, though we are reading their words in English – references are made to the poor English of some characters, and O'Neill liberally uses French idioms, curse words and bits of phrases. French words in the text are italicized but not glossed, and range from that which would likely be understandable to many Anglophone readers – “*Oh mon dieu! Quelle histoire!*” (O'Neill 2014, 243) – to the perhaps less obvious for a monolingual reader – “*Est-ce que ça te dérange?* We don't even know our own mother's name” (36) – and of course include Québécois ‘*sacres,*’ curse words, and slang - ““*Niaiseux!*” I yelled, with my hands flying open toward his face, like a startled dove. ‘*Osti de conne!*’ he yelled back” (139).

O'Neill's use of French is sparing but it does the work of situating us in the linguistic reality of the story, and she is unafraid of alienating the kind of reader who is turned off by the sight of

italicized, non-English words. Instead of attempting to produce a “Montreal English,” an English with particular influences and inflections, O’Neill tells us the story of Nouschka and Nicholas Tremblay in a way that makes us forget we’re not reading the novel in the French its characters are speaking.

The appearance of English in a French text is still very different from the appearance of French in an English text. Despite changes in the ways in which English is used by Francophone Québec writers, it is still wielded in a way that recognizes its power, its place in the world. A Québec reader, for example, is very likely able to understand English words or phrases in a French text, whereas the same cannot be said of an Anglophone reader in a broader Canadian context encountering French words. It is impossible, thus, to recreate the effect of English in a French text by using French in an English text in a kind of one-to-one ratio. However, French can still be used in an English text to signal a certain linguistic hybridity and to give a sense of place. In *Testament* I have chosen to keep in French some words or phrases that are commonly used in French by both Anglophone and Francophone Montrealers – “dépanneur,” “Québécois de souche,” etc – and I have italicized many of Gendreau’s uses of English so as to highlight their appearance in the source text. However, at times I have chosen to not italicize a word in English in the original when it is a “borrowed word” very often used in a French context or to somewhat different effect, preferring to highlight Gendreau’s deliberate and interesting uses of English without bogging down the text by marking every borrowed word.

The autofictional nature of the narrative again influences my approach to the particularities of Gendreau’s language – a novel whose story can be more easily “universalized,” one that is not rooted in specific times and places and the particular details of a life, could perhaps be transposed in a different way with the adoption of one dialect to translate another. I have looked

to the example set by translators like Ellenwood, as well as the work of English-language Montreal writers like O'Neill for guidance in how French might be used in an English narrative to signal that we are in a French-speaking world. Following Gendreau's original text, in which English words are not set off or marked in the French text, I have left any French words in straight text, only emphasizing what was already in English.

Gendreau's use of English is just one of the ways in which she plays with language in *Testament*. Her text is full of wordplay and puns; she frequently co-opts idioms and sometimes invents expressions herself. Some of this play lends itself to translation, the joke intact, while some is inevitably more difficult to recreate in English.

The texts which make up part of each chapter, for example, are titled with puns and wordplay and sometimes English slang or references: "EYE'S WIDE PLOTTE.DOC," "BOMBAY SAPHIQUE.DOC," "WHITE TRASH.DOC." Many are already in English, while others can be translated without losing the wordplay or the joke: EYE'S WIDE PLOTTE.DOC becomes EYE'S WIDE TWAT.DOC, and so on.

Other instances of word play are a little more complex, requiring knowledge of current slang as well as broader French idioms. At one point, Gendreau's narrator essentially "performs" a common idiom without naming it as such. Planning to cook a dinner of eel for the man she's in love with, she imagines taking a photograph of herself to make a dinner invitation:

Je pourrais prendre une photo avec mon ordinateur. Oui. Pour lui proposer le souper. Tiens, un faire-part funky. Je pourrais écrire le mot ROCHE sur un post-it, me le coller sur le front et me tenir accroupie sur l'emballage de l'anguille. La tenir sous mon visage (55).

Holding the eel beneath her forehead now marked ROCK, she is acting out the idiom “il y a anguille sous roche” without ever using the phrase as such. I wanted to find a way to keep the play on this common saying while signaling to a reader of the translation what exactly she’s doing here, as a literal translation of the idiom is meaningless but so too would be the image she describes without knowledge of the idiom. I opted to make her joke explicit for the benefit of the Anglophone reader, supplementing it by inserting the French idiom and then glossing it.

I could take a photo with my computer. Yes. To ask him to dinner. Like a funky invitation. I could write the word ROCK on a post-it, stick it on my forehead and crouch down on the packaging of the eel, hold it under my face. I’ll be the proverbial anguille sous roche, the something fishy going down.

Later in the book, the narrator references a song that riffs off the use of “la patate” as slang for the heart. “Douce ovale pilule bleue, tu es si belle de jour et tu me knockes si bien la nuit. Tu me calmes la patate. Tu fais de mon coeur une frite and de mon sang du ketchup, comme dans la chanson” (146). This poses an obvious problem – “patate” can’t be translated literally and there isn’t really an equivalent slang word for heart that would be in common parlance with young English speakers. Without “la patate,” the rest of this little passage makes no sense. I was thus forced to translate this section more freely, and opted to refer back to another mention of the heart a few pages earlier – “Moi aussi je peux faire des compliments, je suis une fille. Une fille aussi nerveuse et cardiaque qu’un lapin” (140) – while attempting to keep a similar tone. “Sweet blue oval pill, you are so beautiful by day and you knock me out so well by night. You still my beating heart, my frenzied rabbit heart.”

Finally, translating a text of this nature necessitates an awareness of and attention to gender and gendered language in translation. Gendreau is of a different, younger generation than Québécoise feminist writers and translators such as Nicole Brossard and Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, who experimented with language in order to find new ways to write and translate the female

experience and the female body. Despite this, and the accompanying fact that the feminism of Gendreau's generation is not the feminism of this earlier generation, many of the concerns remain the same when it comes to translating her work.

Much of Gendreau's narrative in *Testament* is necessarily of the body: her sick body, her body in treatment, her young, exuberant dancer body, her sexual body and her sexualized body and her sexually violated body. The words she chooses are significant, as language around women's bodies and female sexuality is still loaded, and is wielded with differing intent by different writers. Luise von Flotow has addressed the challenges of translating such writing in her work *Translation and Gender* (1997), in which she looks at the work of feminist translators and the ways in which they approached the task of "reclaiming some of this derogatory vocabulary and developing new terms" (Von Flotow 1997, 19). Von Flotow's discussion of the English translations of a line from Brossard's *La nef des sorcières* is an interesting and oft-cited example of a case in which a somewhat mistranslated or overstated translation of this kind of language best serves the text. "Ce soir j'entre dans l'histoire sans relever ma jupe" becomes, in Linda Gaboriau's translation, "tonight I shall step into history without opening my legs" (19). Such examples are instructive in considering the best ways in which to translate Gendreau's text and the words she chooses to "write her body."

José Santaemilia has written about what he calls "the dangers of self-censorship" in translating writing about sexuality and the body. He makes the case that translating such subject matter poses a test to the translator, who may self-censor in attempts to please the sensibilities of the target culture, or alter the text less consciously, betraying his or her own understanding of and attitudes toward the subject: "The translator basically transfers into his or her rewriting the level of acceptability or respectability he/she accords to certain sex-related words or phrases"

(Santaemilia 2008, 227). Whether conscious or not, such censoring takes away from or even works against the intent of the author. In her analysis of the translations of two of Nelly Arcan's novels, Pauline Henry-Tierney examines the treatment of gender, sexuality and corporeality and finds that Arcan's translators "also apply censorship (be it intentional or not) and euphemism to her references to female sexuality" (Henry-Tierney 2013, 168). Henry-Tierney notes many choices by Arcan's translators that work to take away from and counteract the speaker's agency over her body, softening or blurring her statements. Both Santaemilia and Henry-Tierney make the case that word choice and sentence structure are important when it comes to translating writing that deals with the body and sexuality, as something as simple as a specific metaphorical image is often a deliberate move on the part of the writer to convey agency or power.

The tone and register of Gendreau's writing varies throughout the book, and so too does the vocabulary she uses. A certain candor about sexuality and the body, an unwillingness to shy away from strong or forceful words, however, is constant. When writing the female body, she often uses strong, "reclaimed" words – "la plotte," "la chatte" and "la noune," – but also, on occasion, the more benign, even clinical, "le vagin." "Dans la foule, il n'y a pas de regroupement de danseuses nues avec leurs pancartes MA CHATTE EST CONTRE LA HAUSSE" (Gendreau 2012, 34). These differences in force and register find relative equivalents in English, and I have made an effort to respect the tone and force of her choices in my translation.

The above example brings up another gendered term: "danseuse nue." Throughout the book "Vickie" calls herself a "danseuse nue" or just "danseuse" when referring to her job, choosing this term over the relatively recent "effeuilleuse," which appears only once and in the second person: "Toi, effeuilleuse jusqu'au bout des ongles, qui commences un texte mais le finis pas, pas tout de suite, plus tard" (128). This single use of "effeuilleuse" seems to imbue the term with

a slightly different, larger meaning, an identity or a role rather than just a job, “a stripper to the tips of your fingernails.” “Danseuse nue” is straightforward but also a little softer or milder than the English “stripper.” Yet the other English options are either more euphemistic or inaccurate: “exotic dancer,” “topless dancer,” etc. There’s no real English equivalent to “danseuse nue,” and so despite the slight difference in force, I have used “stripper” throughout, and occasionally just “dancer,” depending on the context, with the reasoning that Gendreau’s narrator doesn’t shy away from strong words or act coyly concerning this aspect of her life. On the contrary, she doesn’t mince words about dancing or about sex work: “Je suis une pute. Je fais la pute cette semaine” (57). There is, in the matter-of-fact vocabulary and tone, a refusal on the part of Gendreau to sensationalize this kind of work. To use euphemistic language rather than matching the force of the original would appear to be an apology, an inability to face the concrete facts of the narrative and the narrator’s attitude toward them.

At the end of the book, her friends, her brother and her reluctant mother come to see her dance at the strip club and her pride in her skill and the pleasure she takes in it is made clear. The power she feels in this role is evident: “Vickie est entrée dans la pièce dripping in gold. [...] Je la regarde tourner autour de son poteau avec ses fuck-me boots et ça me calme. C’est ainsi que je veux la voir dans mes souvenirs. Gold et nue” (147). It is still a politically charged choice for a young woman to write of the body and sex work in this way with no apology or explanation or defense and the translation must not work against this intention.

A major difference in the way gender issues are discussed today is the move away from an essentialist position that focused on women as a biologically determined, homogeneous group, and the introduction of more fluid thinking on gender as a performance and construct as well as the advent of queer theory. Von Flotow’s recent work *Translating Women* (2011) revisits the

question of gender and translation, and the ways in which this question has been complicated in the twenty years since the first works on women in translation appeared. In her preface to this collection, she notes that these new ideas, which have set aside the binary categories of ‘female’ and ‘male,’ have not yet entirely found their way into translation studies:

Oddly, however, current, related ideas about the contingent, performative aspects of gender identity and the discursive construction of gender in social and subjective contexts [...] seem to have found less of an echo or application in translation studies. While gender identities may now be seen as a continuum, on a cline ranging from the two extremes of female to male, and not as a female-male binary, the much discussed performative aspects of gender, which would seem to fit nicely with the performative aspects of translation, have hardly been explored or developed (Von Flotow 2011, 3).

Gendreau’s work requires the translator to engage questions of both of the “paradigms” in gender and translation Von Flotow describes: the first paradigm being the focus on women (and the focus of much of what has been written regarding gender in translation and feminist translation strategies), and the second the anticipated paradigm that engages with the performative as well as queer theories (9). We can see in Gendreau’s text much “reclamation” of gendered terms often used in derogatory ways, as well as some of what now seem like the same old questions about women and women writers:

Tu as dit : Je trouve ça cute une fille qui écrit. C’est comme un chat qui joue du piano. Tu as dit que c’était une joke, j’ai dit que ce n’était pas drôle. Je fais meow et je joue du piano. [...] C’est que je n’écris que par mélancolie et fureur, et ça ce n’est pas cute (Gendreau 2012, 51).

She writes of the very real experiences of her female body – sex, rape, illness – while there is also an awareness of the performative nature of gender, femininity.

Von Flotow discusses Judith Butler’s use of the idea of performativity in gender roles, drawing a parallel between some views of translation and Butler’s likening of “the performance of gender identity with the performance, by different actors, of the same script” (Von Flotow 2011, 5).

Butler’s view of the performative sees it as “always discursively predating, predetermining and

thus producing a certain performance of gender identities, in texts as well as ‘on the street,’” which for Von Flotow hearkens back to “discussions around translation always being ethnocentric and always, somehow, reducing the foreign materials to the local, unable or unwilling to accommodate or perform distance” (7). This stance, however, Von Flotow notes, leaves out the work of feminist translators and scholars such as Barbara Godard and Susan Knutson, who presented the idea of translation as “transformance [translation + performance]” and whose work on translating feminist writing “showed precisely how flexible and creative discourse (and translators, and translations) can be, intimating that it may well be possible to ‘do [and rewrite] one’s gender’ in individual ways” (7-8). The idea of translation as a productive, creative, performative act is an optimistic take on performativity when compared to Butler’s “assessments of discourse as a restricted performative cage” (8). As Von Flotow suggests, translations allow for many and different performances of a text and “most importantly they take up ‘interlocutionary space’ – gaining more in this transformance than they ‘lose in translation,’ to counter that tedious old saying” (9). Sandra Bermann has also discussed the idea of “performing translation” as a productive process, moving from J. L. Austin’s early definition of “performative utterances” to Derrida’s critique and expansion thereupon:

In short, in “performing translation,” we see the figure of Austin’s actor once again. But in the light of Derrida’s iterability, literary performativity does not bring a weakening or etiolation of language. Quite the contrary; its spectacular citationality offers ongoing opportunities for productive interpretations – of texts, languages, conventions, and subjectivities (Bermann 2014, 290).

Here, considering the translation of a text (that itself draws on aspects of a performative genre, the testament) as a performance opens up space for the work of the translation, makes room for the possibilities of it as generative and creative process.

I invoke the work of Von Flotow and others around considerations of gender in translation not because I am intervening in this translation in the same visible ways Canadian feminist translators like Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood have done in the past, strategies that arose in response to specific texts of a specific time. This text does not call for the same kind of interventions that have marked feminist translations in the past. As Carolyn Shread has suggested, “a feminist or queer translation, for instance, does not have to march down a demarcated path to communicate its intent” (Shread 2011, 285). Shread concedes that, given the well-documented tradition of “highly visible feminist translation practices,” the expectation of “readily identifiable” feminist translation strategies is understandable (286). For Shread, the possibilities of a feminist translation go beyond “innovation at the micro level.”

Through text selection and the creation of new aesthetics, feminist translators are involved in expressing feminine consciousness and experience as a counterpoint to the historical suppression of women’s voices, needs and priorities (290).

A woman writing autofiction, particularly a narrative so much of the body, is still always already a political, feminist act in some ways. But the text itself doesn’t put this forth as an agenda. It is both broader than that and more specific, about the experience of one life lived by one young, sick body in this world, not that of all bodies or all women.

And yet the contributions of feminist translation scholars and practitioners are relevant to this project, as I consider the weight and force of Gendreau’s language, the ways in which she writes her body, and ideas of performativity and translation as performance and the possibilities therein for bringing her narrative, her testament, into English.

Conclusion

As I have shown, Vickie Gendreau's *Testament* is a complex work drawing on several different traditions. Gendreau invokes the forms of the testament and the elegy in her autofiction, all the while writing in a distinct style full of wordplay and moments of linguistic hybridity. It is at once a funny, irreverent and honest account of illness and an unflinching facing up to the fact of an impending, too-early death. The autofictional form allows Gendreau to gain back in writing some of the agency lost in the battle with terminal illness; writing her own death, she takes control of that narrative, at least for these moments, in this particular context. What results is an audacious, vulnerable and witty text that subverts the elegy and plays with the testament. Now, two years after the author's death, her *Testament* performs its own title.

Translating this work was a challenging project on the level of form and style, but also in a larger sense: a most personal and urgent kind of autofiction demands a sort of reverence from the translator who would rewrite it. And yet the translator must feel free to make the text work in the target language, whether that necessitates inserting a supplementary word or two, glossing a joke, or more freely translating a pun or play on words. This is where thinking about the performative nature of both the text and of translation itself creates space for creativity. I have looked to the text and how it might best be served in making choices for its translation, whether regarding literary and cultural references, the use of English words and phrases, or the word play, co-opted idioms, and puns that appear throughout the work. *Testament* being so much a narrative of illness and the body, as well as a woman-authored autofiction, I have looked to considerations of gender issues in translation in order to approach the text as mindfully as possible when it comes to Gendreau's writing on the body and sexuality. Above all, whenever the choice arose between further adapting the book for the target audience and allowing the translation to "declare

itself as such,” I have chosen the latter approach. There is a certain privilege in being the reader of an autofiction such as this, a testament made public, one that takes you into the world, the life and death of its narrator/author, and such privilege demands something of the reader. I have tried to keep the work in English rooted in its author’s world, regardless of who her new readers will be.

Part II

Testament

By Vickie Gendreau

Translated by Aimee Wall

Introduction

I have chosen to include two excerpts of my translation of *Testament* that give a sense of the overall form and structure of the book as well as illustrating some of the translation challenges discussed in the commentary.

The first excerpt is from the second section of the book, “Pavilion B,” and begins with a chapter in the voices of Vickie and her friend Maxime, interspersed with a text written by Vickie. This is followed by two of the seven testamentary chapters – the first addressed to Stanislas, the man Vickie is in love with, and the second to Raphaëlle, an old friend. The second excerpt is from the third and final section of the book, “Pavilion C,” and is a chapter in many voices, beginning with Vickie and the texts she’s written about her treatments, and moving into the voices of the people in her life, the other characters in the book, who have come to see her dance at the club.

Despite the fact that I have decided against the use of notes in the translation itself, as discussed in the commentary, for the purposes of this thesis, I have included some notes throughout these two excerpts of the translation to highlight or explain some of the translation challenges encountered in these passages and how I chose to resolve them.

PAVILION B

VICKIE

At night, I smoke cigarettes outside of Pavilion B. The pavilions are connected to the main building. My room is in A. It's cold out, I'm wearing a bathrobe. You don't smoke, but you keep me company. I'm the one who's going to die, not you, not yet. The firefly that wouldn't leave you alone flies off and another takes its place, as if to protect you from secondhand smoke.

EYE'S WIDE TWAT.DOC

I remember the kids who left, the lit streetlights. I remember mostly why I left. Caprice (the girl not the word) was telling some story. It's what girls do, whine and tell stories. I have a vagina and what really gets on my nerves is when people use the full name of someone we all know, just to make themselves seem important. Seriously. I get it, Samson, when you give me a hard time for naming all the people in my stories even if the reader doesn't know them. It's annoying. Both my ex and my best friend are named Mathieu. I also get it that you, Caprice, want to seem well-connected. But calm down. It's just a journalist. When you start a sentence with "my friend So-and-so," I don't believe you. Nobody does. You fall in love with a guy after sleeping with him once. Without fail. You have a pretty loose idea of friendship. I don't even want to imagine what would have happened if you'd slept with your famous journalist. What were you going to do? Add a few words, a little paragraph on the length and thickness of his cock? See what I mean? And you still wouldn't have started your story. I pull out my demagnetized metro pass. There's a line-up. In front of me, a guy and a girl, two cellphones.

- I stretched out in the park and read my book, says the guy in front of me into his phone.
- There was a bird caught in the window, says the girl in front of me into her phone. I was in the little shop at the corner of Pap and Laurier. The one where I bought my hat. You like my hat? It's funny, right?
- Jean Genet. *Les nègres*. Funny thing to read in a big sunny park.
- I was thinking that a baby bird might have touched it, my hat. That's sort of why I bought it.
- Would have been nice to have some chocolate sauce to go with my pineapple chunks. Yeah, I have some left in a Tupperware. I didn't finish the book. I didn't get anything done today.
- I started singing "La vie en rose" to the other one, the girl who was shouting, short hair and big eyes. It was super cute with my hat.
- *Nigga please!*
- Like a French Liza Minnelli.
- One ticket please.
- Oh, some guy in front of me. But I'm going to get two tickets, I'll probably come back tonight.

The guy realizes: the girl is looking at him intensely. Bonjour, tension.

¹ This is a first instance in this excerpt of English in the original French text. I have italicized this and other significant uses of English, as discussed in the commentary.

MAXIME

The guy at the wicket holds out a key to Vickie, winking. He whispers: the bike rack, in front of the station. She thought she'd seen something squirming and sparkling through the filthy window, like in a video game, a soft porn film from the seventies, a race in slow motion: fifteen wriggling fennec foxes. She's going to need a bigger bag.

EYE'S WIDE TWAT.DOC

Everyone's talking on the phone. Mine is dead and nobody calls me anyway. They didn't even call me to let me know that Max killed himself. I found out by email. A friend is dead and people can't stop laughing. On Facebook, everybody goes on with their lives and I do too. I go on, doing nothing, contemplating my news feed. It reminds me of when my grandmother was in the hospital. I'd found out through email. Life is fragile and it just goes on. Raphaëlle was angry at Caprice. "She organized the picnic in memory of Max like you'd organize any old get-together. She just wants to drink." She was right. I gave one of my beers to Caprice. The day of the email, I was mixing orangeade into my vodka. I'd forgotten to buy juice. The neighbour's kids were making a ton of noise. It was crazy up there, up above my head and inside it too. The kids go to bed late. I could still go to the store to buy juice. To Videotron to return the movies I didn't have the time to watch. I'm totally vegetative right now. This is my first drink, I'm hoping the vodka will give me energy to go for a walk. That's what normal people do, go for walks. After dinner, to digest, to think. With the kids, to take them to McDonald's for a surprise. To the park or the shoe store, everywhere, anywhere for a surprise. My cousin Anabel, when she was the same age

as the kids upstairs, had more shoes than my Barbies. Her own personal Panda Shoes, they didn't even all fit in her closet. I remember the alluring chaos of the hallway. I would show up when I hadn't been invited. At Christmas, it was always well organized. In my mind, there are two kids, the same age, the kids upstairs I mean. I'd like to go for a walk. Max is dead. He committed suicide. They're all committing suicide all the time. We lead difficult lives, my friends and I. He wasn't a close friend. He committed suicide either way. In my mind, the kids upstairs are diabolical. They're a part of my circle. Two little girls, constantly jumping and shouting. Suicidal parents. Eloquent future cheerleaders, slightly intelligent bimbos, just smart enough, chatty extraverts, *drama queens*. Right now, they're just two little idiots jumping and shouting. I wonder what's actually happening up there. What real life is like for these people. I stayed on Facebook all day. I watched the news feed scroll. Life is vulgar and it just goes on. I won't recount what people were saying. I'm not here on this earth today to report the facts. Max threw himself off a viaduct. The day before he'd asked if I had a number for MDMA. I didn't. Maybe I should have had one, and I should have more than just this old bottle of orangeade to mix with my vodka. You can't take Smirnoff straight.

Can't take the death of a friend straight, either. I don't even have a full bottle. Samson says that what I'm drinking is called student sangria. I find that funny, ironic, but I don't dare laugh.

I don't dare read much either. I'm pretty much useless. But whatever.

Eat me on a bagel. I'm a smoked student.

Never go back to school, just be ready for it.

MAXIME

I started by swinging a fox off the viaduct, then a second one, then a third. Two hundred, then three hundred. She caught them all in her big bag. A bottomless catch-all. I jumped but there was no room left inside. *Sorry.*

POULIN ROUGE.DOC

There are no mistakes on the signs carried by the waves of student protesters. There is no little pool of red light to indicate where to find Stanislas and his new concubine in the crowd. There's no little group of frustrated feminists like I imagined, severe women who sneer and judge. Why is nobody sneering and judging? I should have worn a skirt, I could have sneered. It would have been the same. I don't judge. I'll never be important enough to judge. I would so like to be severe and frigid. I'd like to be stupid and ugly too. I'd like to not reduce the world down to two adjectives. I don't even want to imagine what mine would be. They wouldn't be flattering. Maybe I am severe and frigid in the end. We are marching against adversity. We are all dressed up in red in our own ways. My eyes are always full of red. They were brown a few weeks ago. Brown like what you leave in the toilet. All the same, it's a more encouraging colour than red. I cried more tears than were in my body. Because of this guy. We are so many things. I am touching and full. But vain. Like this crowd: vain. In my life: vain. I don't think I'm pretty anymore. I'm still crying over my failed creamed corn, I cry over everything all the time. I cry with my eyes, my nose, my mouth. I keep repeating the possessive adjective because I often feel like I'm a stranger to my own face. I put my eyes back into my own face because these eyes belong to me, so as to

not forget that, to not cease to exist, to be able to see. Reality bores me. It disappoints me. I'd like to be called Samantha. I'm angry at my mother. Why not Samantha? She doesn't respond. I'm depressing her. She looks for me in the newspaper but doesn't find me. Tomorrow, I'll say: Look, Maman, I'm somewhere in that crowd. I hope the headline isn't too nasty. Somewhere in that crowd. There is no area code to contain my sadness. I could go work far away from here, far from the guy, but I'd always be this melancholy. The whole universe is black nihilism. I see hippies with big plastic trumpets in the crowd. They're making noise. But then, everyone's making noise. Nobody's listening. You can't listen to photos, you can just put them in the newspaper with nasty headlines. I'll take a photo with my phone. Oh right, I don't have one anymore. I couldn't give my mother's phone number to the police if I got arrested. I have to stay calm. Far from the headlines. I'd like to be a little bad though. The hippies go on and on with their noise. I stretch out my arm, it is infinitely long, it's a ribbon. I grab hold of a trumpet and put it to my lips. I've got something to say too.

In the crowd there's no group of strippers with their signs: MY PUSSY IS AGAINST THE HIKE. There are no journalists with feather dusters in their asses. There's nobody sleeping, no serenity, not a drop of rosé. In the crowd there are no cherry trees. There's no bathroom. There's no lineup at the library. There's no lineup at the dépanneur.

I close my eyes, I open them. I'm at the dépanneur buying black cherry juice.

MAXIME

Noise from inside the beer fridge, little cries. Fennec foxes, assorted cases of foxes, zero percent foxes. She takes a case of a dozen iced tea flavoured foxes.

POULIN ROUGE.DOC

The hippie whose trumpet I snatched leaves in a taxi to find it. My driver, the dancers' driver, tells me that if I'm poetic then he's a poem. I want to cry. I cry. I do what I like. I'm a princess. Trash royalty, but a princess all the same.

- Where to, mademoiselle?
- Not school.

VICKIE

There will always be a collection agency to wake me up in the morning. There will always be a pot of something rotten in my fridge. There will always be someone to hate me. Someone to make a fool of myself to on the telephone at three in the morning. Someone to treat me like a slut in front of my family. Someone to steal my drink, someone to steal my purse.

POULIN ROUGE.DOC

Exit Moody Boulevard North.

Pass by La Plaine, Jane.

Arrive at a strip club in a redneck's red pick-up: *check*.

Feel sad: *check*.

Write original erotic stories for Stanislas: *check*.

Client who smells of patchouli: *came*.

Lip-synch the words of Sexy Sushi on stage: *check*.

Do a number to “Raise your weapon” and lift a leg during the chorus: *check*.

Client who drives a huge Benz: *came*.

Drink a Nitrous Yellow Monster in two gulps: *check*.

Eat an endive salad in three bites: *check*.

Throw out the leftover sesame shrimp from the restaurant: *check*.

Go to a funeral in a babydoll: *check*.

VICKIE

Raphaëlle loaned me the babydoll. *Stanislas Merdier, Anne Archet and 8 others have tweets for you*. But that's all they have for you. I met a client who had the Enlarge Your Penis machine.

One of my condoms met his penis, his money met my wallet, and later on that day my face met the closed door of the fish market. *They have tweets for you. That's all they'll ever have for you. Consider yourself lucky, fille.* Respond with something witty. Say yes constantly without knowing the question. Say yes and skip. It's exhausting, singing while working this hard. You're allowed a rest, girl, *take a break.* Eat your granola, drink your coffee. Listen to your loud, annoying music, get annoyed, but don't forget you have to look after the animals. The speakers are blasting, the foxes dance. It's annoying. Something important is happening. A black fly is chilling not far from a fox. They aren't like cats, the foxes, they don't hunt insects. They dance. Félix Cartal provides the beat. The fox extends a paw, the insect too. I have Félix in my headphones. The black fly is suddenly in Raphaëlle's hair. I thought we were somewhere else and that it was a brooch. I'm always surprised, always lost. I'm usually always at the hospital. But Raphaëlle took me out today. Nice surprise. It's Max's funeral today. She brought a pile of beautiful black clothes. I don't even remember anymore if I asked, if I was polite. I don't remember anything. It's fun, missing pieces like that. Everyone misses pieces. I remember everything, absolutely everything. Remembered. Verb tenses hurt. Especially when it's about you you and it's you who's writing them. I chose the babydoll dress from the pile of black clothes. I went to the funeral with that on my back. Yeah, I'm that kind of girl. A bit slutty. You love to hate me.

I'm at Kingdom, corner of Saint-Laurent and Sainte-Cath.

Mindy and Trevor examine my body with sticky hands.

Nikky is beautiful.

More beautiful than me.

More fluid than me.

I fall down everywhere.

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

I'm in New York.

In front of the cage of fennec foxes at the Brooklyn zoo.

I got special permission to pet them.

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

I see Austria, I meet Ulrich Seidl.

He tells me about his next film.

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

I'm at a noise show with the dudes from Granular Synthesis.

I close my eyes.

I keep them closed a long time.

I will do none of these things.

On Sunday, I'll go to Beautys with my friends, drink a Cookies & Creme milkshake.

That, I'll do.

Eyes open, wide.

To Stanislas, I bequeath:

these two texts,

a piano-playing cat

and two hundred fennec foxes.

STANISLAS

I come across as a dirty dog. She says she took a lot of showers because of me. But I knew just how to earn her love until the end. A city needs a lot of one-way streets to make us appreciate the ones that run both ways. Love Boulevard. That girl was way too intense. Too much passion in one girl. I met her in that bookstore. I'm standing in front of the door, I can't go in, it's closed. Somewhere in the world, it's raining.

STARGIRL SATAN.DOC

I will not be that stupid girl. I could be all the others, just not that one. I will not change your name in my book in the hopes that one day you'll talk to me again. I'll go on being the devil. The devil who screws with the heads of all those stupid little girls, one after another. I'll sow my seed. Even if there's no earth, no soil, even if it's just a warp zone of fallow land. You were there, next to me in the bookstore, right there. It was for a book launch. You were right there, a bicep curl away. And my lips. Oh, my lips. I wash the glasses to distract myself. I hide in the little vestibule to wash the dishes and I cry. You'd think I want to wash the glasses to be nice but really it's to cry, to bawl my eyes out even. The booksellers think I'm nice, but really I'm just crying. Crying in the back room. Two faucets just above my nose. At least I'm safe here, nobody can disturb me or worry about me. My head in the sand, and in the dishes. The little glasses sparkle. I wonder if I could fill an ice tray with the weepy wailing pouring from my face. I've got a degree in Managing Shit but no room left in my backpack. Enough is enough. My red bag is too red. My hair is too curly. And there are too many people here. My hair was curly like this when we met.

STANISLAS

I met Vickie at Port de tête. I was going out with Alexie at the time. I'd never heard her name before. She said I seemed horribly pretentious. I plugged their Gala for the Academy of Literary Life at the turn of the 21st Century. I think I was nice. She thought I was pretentious. I was maybe not ready to meet her. She was wearing the same sequined hat when I met her again later on. She remembers everything, absolutely everything, that girl.

STARGIRL SATAN.DOC

The man of my dreams, right there, for a while now. I'm avoiding him, I stand far away. He's been talking about his pigeon infestation for a while, about his life without me, entirely without me. I'd almost forgotten that I'm the devil. The devil is not the type to cry. That's something, at least. I'm at least that much human. I stay in the little vestibule for a few minutes. I watch the door, I'm afraid he might show up. I'll pour what's left of my face into the sink again. I check that I'm safe, then plop, the whole sink is filled in one shot. I go out on the terrace. Smoke alone. Far from other faces. If I don't have a face, nobody does. A proverb. More in love with him than he is with me. Another proverb. My leather ankle boots are damp. A big hole in the right foot. Humidity doesn't know gravity. My pocket vibrates. I'd almost forgotten that there's a cell phone in my life, that you can reach me when I put some minutes on it. Or when I can find it in the mess of my bedroom. Completely forgotten that I was sending vibrations to my friends' pockets a little while ago. My friends are here. I have to find them. They're inside. I go in. I look for

capas. I find their trench coats. Where's Stanislas? Look into the little bus mirror perched between the books. Proust, Proust, Nietzsche and me, not a writer. I'm a long way from literature. Between the two rows. Trying to memorize the titles of films people suggest to me. More wine. More melancholy. More wine. Didn't dare touch it before, but my friends are here now. Kleenex, little white capas that you fish from coloured boxes. I'm coloured. My sleeve is a tissue. For now. We go back out on the terrace because I need to smoke. Being sad stresses me out. Fuck yes. You're here. You ask how I'm doing. I find that question ridiculous. I don't answer. I'm going to implode. I tell you my birthday's on Saturday.

STANISLAS

I reread every email she sent me, I reread her last one. It's been months, years, a long time. I stare at the package Mathieu sent me, distracted. I put it on my desk. I'm a bit freaked out. She was crazy about me. Now, she's dead. I was at her funeral. She wasn't there. Her body was in the black box. She left super fast without saying bye to anyone. That morning, instead of putting on a sparkly dress, the shirt I gave her and her eternal black leggings, her fuzzy skirt with that awful sweater covered in horses... instead of all that, that morning she put on a black box. Finito.

STARGIRL SATAN.DOC

I go hide in the shadows and dig in my purse. I find something to smoke. At least I can smoke. The guy doesn't give a shit about me, but at least I can smoke something, something that belongs

to me, just to me, this cigarette, metaphor, match, melancholy, gasoline. Smoke myself. And smoke these lousy memories. But never see the end of it. An unlimited package. Maybe we have to lose ourselves in the simple things. Maybe that's the only place we can properly lose ourselves. My friends are leaving. Laure is here to remind me that the last time we saw each other I was so drunk and sad I fell down. I made myself so beautiful. I'd like to talk to Laure about my love problems. She's a girl, she'll get it. I want to spew my love problems all over other people but I have nothing to wipe them up with afterward. I wasn't made for all this. I found a blue flowered jacket in my boxes this afternoon. I could wear that to my birthday. Fuck my birthday. Fuck the entire month of April. I feel like I'm going to end up crying on Saturday. Because I thought, yes. We'd made plans, yes. So many plans. My birthday. My thoughts repeating. I leave the bookstore so that nobody will see me crying. Flowers for nobody. I'll weave a necklace of flowers and offer everything that flows out of me. To whom? To nobody. Vickie Who? Vickie Nobody. I'm everyone and nobody at the same time. Félix seems disgusted by the world around him. I get it. The stairs ahead. I pass a girl. She asks me if I'm okay. I explode or implode, I don't know anymore. I think I haven't completely given up, I was sane up until then. Why? I don't know. I'm the devil, that I know. Two other girls come outside. One's named Ariane, she's the girl who looks like Pippi Longstocking from behind, she tells me she's waiting for Laure and Stanislas. To go to a show. She asks me how I'm doing. I choose to hear only every second word. Because it seems more fun to imagine than to know. We talk, we talk. He comes out. You come out. The girls leave. I feel like I'm going to cry. I want it to happen more quickly. You're wearing a button-down shirt. She looks like she smells good. You smell so good. I would kiss you all night. I would spend my whole life showering you with compliments. I said none of this. No. I thought about rabbits, about Radio Radio, Ryan Gosling in a jacuzzi.

Nobody lets their kitten out on Mont-Royal at night. Or during the day. The kitten definitely washes the dishes all day long in the back room.

STANISLAS

I made love to a bunch of other girls and I'm not stingy with my lust. I'm selective. It doesn't bother me to be a little chaste. It's just summer, it's hot out, that's all, it's understandable. What I do with my body is nobody's business. I think it's a little because of this that she wanted us to stop talking. She pretty much knew what was up and it worried her that she didn't know everything. I wouldn't have answered anyway. All or nothing with that girl. I went to Italy. She knew how to say one word in Italian. Uccello. It means bird. It's not really useful in any practical sense. You can point at the birds and say what they are. The language level of a seven-year old kid. At most. Note that a bird doesn't keep still, it could be hard to know what she was pointing at if she didn't specify. The kind of girl who could point to a particular cloud, a dense little one over the garden let's say, and tell you about it for hours. Long descriptions worthy of great novels or strung-together foolishness worthy of little rags. All-terrain girl. She could have pointed out the cloud, the plane or a patch of the stratosphere, but she always focused her energy on the bird. The bird is important.

STARGIRL SATAN.DOC

Pierre is definitely at Bar Inc. I could definitely fuck Pierre. It's not important who he is. I could fuck the whole world. Some would even pay. But I won't do it. No. I'm only capable of fucking a stranger when I'm drunk. But in any case I always end up talking about Stanislas. About you. We don't fuck. I console myself. And the next day, I regret it. And the day after that I find the freezer cozy. I forget. Everything except the guy I should forget. You sit next to me. My face goes crazy. My eyelid twitching incessantly. A brown car passes by the bookstore. Something enters me and refuses to leave. You're right there. I don't understand anything anymore. I say things. I respond. Sentences gush out. Félix crosses the road, I see him through my tears. I'm crying. Oh. I'm the devil. But the devil who writes well. But the devil who no longer writes. So write. Go elsewhere. You leave. Yes. You leave. I turn around and you've disappeared. It's fine, it's better. It's good like this. It's stupid. I'm stupid. I cried. I can't stop myself anymore. Mathieu crosses the road. Everyone crosses. Everyone sees me, but I see nothing. I'm boring, wet and sad. People cross and the people who cross like what I write even if I don't write anymore. I've already written enough for a few more days. I can do very little with my evening now, I can just cry while listening to sad music. My hairspray smells like lilies of the valley. My little foot powder too. The humidity reminds me of it. I met a girl at a rave who was named Lily. She had only one arm. We felt like butterflies. Lily had just one wing, but she was still a butterfly. To go into my cocoon. To forget the guy. So I can go out and never end up drunk because I'm too sad. Too sad to forget. I'm going round in circles. I remember everything. Everything. Not him. Me, yes. Not you. Not a big deal. So many friends. God I just talk their ears off. I don't give a shit. Ears grow back. Hair too. So burn it. An idea. So that people will go away. The staircase is my staircase. My body is my body.

STANISLAS

When I watch the Mr. Peabody video, the nice baby owl taking his bath, I think about her. The moment someone says something about fennec foxes, I see her face. She would have wanted it this way. Uccello, fennec. Vickie. Three little periods. I always hated exclamation points. She said she'd stopped writing. It's not true. I felt the brown envelope that Mathieu sent me. I'm pretty sure there's a USB key in there. Today, Vickie is wearing a USB key and a brown envelope, it's cold out, it's winter. She's naked underneath. Always naked, that girl.

STARGIRL SATAN.DOC

A friend comes to see me. He takes me in his arms without saying a word. I ask him why. He tells me I look like I'm about to explode. It's the end of the night with the dubstep. I start crying uncontrollably. Fireworks that can't quite get it up. The driver calls. He's there. I cross the road. I climb in. Finally. Why finally? Why the big deal? I got all dressed up for nobody, for nobody who wants me in any case. I love a man who doesn't love me back, not as I am in any case. You don't want to talk to me anymore, but you like nudging me. I'm not your guy friend, dude. *Come on.* I'm a breakable little girl. And I was hot all over just because of your little nudge. All this desire and all this love, yes it's definitely love, all of it wasted. On a boy I still dream about every day. I'll curl up naked in my pillows and tomorrow my client will call me to have dinner. He'll tell me that I'm beautiful, that the boy is stupid for not wanting me because I'm a fucking catch and all that. The dancers' driver told me, to "console" me, that all boys are rapists at heart. But

not all of them, monsieur. I don't know your boys, but I know this one with the elbow from just now and he is absolutely extraordinary. This is why it's so difficult.

STANISLAS

I can't go back to this bookstore to cry in the same spot she did. I can't cry without the bookstore. The bookstore is closed. There are no more students. Outside, it's the apocalypse. The end of the world in winter. I remember Vickie had told me about a Mayan symbol that represented a waking death. She wanted to tattoo it on the back of her neck. I didn't check to see if she'd done it. I didn't lift her skull from its cozy little cushion. Her coffin didn't seem like an adequate clothing choice. The little cushion offended me with its cozy pout. She never published a book. I wonder if Mathieu will take it on. I'm sure she hears me, that she's awake. I spoke to the prettiest of the plants when I whispered to her that I did like her a lot anyway.

I finally insert the USB key into its slot. I inspected it thoroughly beforehand. I wore a condom to sleep with her. I'm vigilant. I feel a little sick. In the Finder window, I can see that the key is named Cuntjuice. I don't even remember the taste anymore. Just what it looked like. A mole in the center, at the top, so small it could have been mistaken for a hair. I remember. She told me that her stepfather had taken the mole on her hand to be a bit of chocolate. He couldn't know. I wonder what he would think of me. He's Italian. Italians like me. I know how to say more than a single word.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

You said: I find it so cute, a girl writing. It's like a cat that plays the piano. You said it was a joke, I said it wasn't funny. I meow and I play the piano. I would go out for tea with you, but there's a man coming to "tune my piano." It's just that I only write out of melancholy and fury, and that's not cute. I'm not cute when I write. I cry, I get all snotty, it gushes out. Not cute. Not meow. But from now on, yes. I will wear beautiful clothes to write in. I'll curl my hair, I'll wax my brows, my bikini line too. I'll put on girly music and bounce around. I'll be like a feather duster on ecstasy. Meow. I'll wear my festival of love badge over my heart. My chest will taste like strawberries, or rhubarb. The unanticipated jugular pulsates. A fancy adjective and then a verb, the significance of which I ignore. I'm cute, don't forget. The soldiers will have foam swords. And me, I'll be pretty. I'll tell you that all this was just a dream. Hummingbird eyelids. I'll let you touch my politics with your big hairy man hands. The little nationalist deluge, with girl with an informed look. The activist look works well for other young women. Piano.

STANISLAS

She's not always nice. Not always nice forever. This will never end. I explained to her that it was a joke. I told her she was twisting my words. She responded with something vague. I understood that I'd made her want to take a shower and that she'd done so. There must still be a trace of that shampoo in her hair.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

I'm positive this has already happened to you too. You with your vagina, or you who can imagine having one. Nobody will admit it. It's too personal. It involves just you, the fridge, and the night. I'm not ashamed. Bold as brass, or stainless steel². The night is totally clear. I'm that kind of bird. Meow, piano. You get up to drink juice from the carton. Why bother with a glass, nobody's watching. Drinking while thinking, it's always messy. Beatrice Lemonade. It costs like two dollars. It's not worth any flourish, no crystal needed. You're worth it, without question, but why bother, nobody's watching. So you take a couple swigs from the carton. In a nightdress. In what looks like a sweater for the daytime but has become a nightdress. Baggy clothes. Mathieu says you're pretty when you wear baggy things. Meow, piano. The lemonade spills, your chin glistens, the liquid runs down your skin. On your belly, it meets the dress: it's as if your belly button peed. It continues to run, to flow down. It stops short at the top of your mound. You're still standing, your back arched. Professional requirement. That's how we look cute in high heels, when we drink juice from the carton on our way to piss in the middle of the night. Meow, piano. I write these lines with an arched back.

STANISLAS

That has never happened to me. I'll nod along, but that has never happened to me. I sleep naked. Sometimes in boxers. I don't even want to imagine what she would have done with my boxers if I'd left her a pair, as a souvenir. I just emptied the contents of the envelope onto the kitchen

² The original line here reads "Du front tout le tour du frigo," a play on the expression "avoir le front tout le tour de la tête," which obviously could not be translated literally, so I made a play on a similar English expression in its place.

counter. My shirt fell out with a disgusting sound, like a handful of boiled spinach onto a porcelain plate. What did you do to this pretty shirt, poor girl? I think again of the name of the USB key and I'm a little frightened. Maybe I should wear gloves.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

Mathieu says that if I spend three days on the couch with my current set-up, I'm going to look like the little girl in *The Grudge*. That's funny. Arch your back, little girl. Type your tax forms with an arched back. Type your angry little texts, your back arched. Lose your mind, back arched. Meow, piano. I didn't wipe up the spilled lemonade. I'll get up. Marriage material. I'll cook too, while I'm at it. I'm making a pot of chili. I need to find smoked eel for tomorrow. I need a bargaining chip. I'm inviting myself to dinner at his place tomorrow, it's decided. He'll never invite me himself. A smoked eel in exchange for sex. A barter. I could wait for him in the living room while he puts on music, unwrap the eel, lay my clothes on the couch, get into a bridge pose and put the eel around my pelvis, as if it was a belt. Table woman. Maybe I'm crazy but it'd make me laugh. He might also laugh. He's a Louperivois, he was born in Rivière-du-Loup³ and then moved to Montreal. He might get it. The fish shop is closed. My pussy is sad. The taxi driver tells me that there's another. Let's go. Meow, piano.

STANISLAS

³ I supplemented the text here to clarify that a "Louperivois" is a person from Rivière-de-Loup, which might not be obvious to an English-language reader.

Fuck. Why don't I love you? Seriously. You're perfect. Is that what you want me to say? You're kind of the one who decides. Making macramé out of my vocal cords. Weave, little idiot. Keep weaving. Make me say everything you hope to hear. Weave more, harder. So that I fuck meow harder. Not you, another, someone else. It's summer, I'm hot.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

Smoked eel takes less time to cook, he started to explain to me earlier. It'll be basic eel at this point. Then I thought I could just hang it from the overhead light in the living room and then smoke like a chimney, as usual, and that would be that. Take your time, oven, I have lots to say with my body to your owner. I could dance for him. That would help me create a distance. I could take a photo with my computer. Yes. To ask him to dinner. Like a funky invitation. I could write the word ROCK on a post-it, stick it on my forehead and crouch down on the packaging of the eel, hold it under my face. I'll be the proverbial anguille sous roche⁴, the something fishy going down. It's dark in the second fish shop. Nobody sells fish in the dark. They sell fish at the IGA, the driver tells me. I'd catch the dumb eel myself if I had the time. We just passed by a fountain. If I were an eel, I'd be there. Go for the IGA. Meow, piano.

STANISLAS

⁴ The original paragraph made no mention of the expression "il y a anguille sous roche," as it would be obvious to a French-language reader that she is acting out this common expression. I decided to supplement the text here to let an English-language reader in on the joke.

It's not true. I don't believe you. You wouldn't have taken a forty dollar taxi to zig-zag from one fish shop to another. It would have been so merciful, to love you. I could have eaten smoked eel every night. I would have been your pimp. I would have sent you everywhere, across all of Québec, so that you could bring back everything I want to eat. A boy king. Go, young queen, go to Abitibi, it's hunting season. Bring me fresh meat, make me a stew. Pots clanging. Ding. It's ready.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

The driver tells me that he'd get me to dance. That I'm so pretty, so nice. If he knew how I'm never enough, how I'll never be enough. I tell him that my client said I should call myself Snow White, because I have dark hair and pale skin. I tell him that I danced for a dwarf the same night, that it was so cute. The dwarf wanted to fuck me, that part was less cute. My mother's ears are getting a perm. I tore a ligament in my foot this week. I have to dance in cowboy boots. Tough week. My wallet's ego hurts so much that its zipper broke just now as I was about to pay at the Brûlerie. What do I do with my life? I write books, monsieur. Books that everyone can understand. Yes, a bit like *Twilight* but better, more poetic, let's say. I have pale skin, I'm a vampire, it's required. No, they're not pop psychology. The parents of the boy with the eel are psychologists. No, he's not my boyfriend. No, he doesn't love me. Yes, I'm hung up. He's the man of my life, monsieur, I'm just not the woman of his. The driver tells me to drop the 'monsieur,' he's going to get me to dance. We arrive at the IGA. I have to turn left, then run straight to the back. Meow, piano.

STANISLAS

You don't meow for anyone now. I don't give a shit about your private journal.doc. I'd like to react.doc but I won't. I'll criticize you. I'll tell you what you really are and everyone will listen to me because I'm still alive. You say that you're no one and everyone all at once, to be cute, but in actual fact you're nothing. You're pus, that's what you are. Pus that rots away the words and all of literature. This is how it is. Accept it.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

I'm a whore. I'm playing the whore this week. No choice, too many expenses, and then this whole thing with the eel. But there are no eels here. He won't want me. I'm worthless without the eel. Meow. I buy two jars of whelks in vinegar. They come from Baie-Comeau, they're shellfish. Bathing in a whitish liquid. I'm going to have to buy more batteries for my dildo. I'll put the jar on a table in my bedroom. I'm going to have to masturbate thinking about the whitish liquid in the jar. Nothing's changed. I'm just more of a whore than last month. Piano. I would totally bring you a jar of whelks to watch you suck them, but this man is coming over to "tune my piano." I arch my back just as I should and write this poem:

I drink two dollar lemonade

and I love you

fuck meow harder

so I drip

a little

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

The bird.

I call Dr. Boutiller The Bird.

He's nice.

He takes my hand.

I blink.

The Decadron makes my face swell and my eyes blink.

To give you an idea.

Yesterday my pillow was all kinds of things.

It started out as a cat.

Then, a dog.

When I opened my eyes, I saw.

It was a pillow the whole time.

I'm still at Notre-Dame.

My dinner will be here soon.

I'll sit on the chair.

I'll be a magician.

My ass is a dove.

I'll make it disappear.

To Raphaëlle, I bequeath:

this text for Thomas,

the babydoll she lent me

and a hundred fennec foxes.

RAPHAËLLE

We were friends. We knew each other from high school. I set my alarm for five am to go to work. She was leaving her job at that time. Different rhythms of life. Mathieu sent me a brown envelope full of black clothes I'd loaned her. I found this text on a key in the pocket of my jacket. I always know what to wear but never what to say. She was the one who knew what to say. I'm only good at copy-pasting. At understanding the intensity, but not at writing it.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

I have another friend who committed suicide. I have a friend who just died. I have a friend who just took his life. These words fall onto the pavement. Thomas died today. You think, but you don't think. These sentences, when it's your friend who said them to you on the telephone, it wasn't too bad, it hit hard, it hurt, but they were still nothing but sentences. You don't know what to say, nobody ever knows what to say, you have nothing to say, you know that you don't have to say anything, but you try, you start a sentence,

I can't believe that,

I wonder how his mother can,

I remember that night in his parents' basement the time that,

I remember the website he'd made to write about his two years traveling in China, where he'd talked about me, about how fun I was, and creative, and how much he was going to miss me,

I remember having read his Facebook status updates, that they'd made me smile, that he'd seemed like he was blossoming,

you manage to compile a list of memories, but you know that you're already beginning to forget them, you're angry at yourself, at your goldfish memory, you're angry to have stopped writing to him, two years ago already. You wonder if you would have been able to change something, if you would have known how to find the right words, heal a wound here and there, you wonder if you could have postponed this act. You tell yourself that you could have called him, that you could have asked for his number, called him once in a while. You tell yourself that you could have called him that very day, surprised him, told him something nice, something simple and sincere. You wonder if that could have had some small effect.

RAPHAËLLE

Her headphones didn't do it for her. She was a girl made for speakers. I'd loaned her mine, the black headphones, they're in the brown envelope. I wonder if her earwax will mix with mine. I wonder if her ears are still producing wax. I could call The Parakeets or The Bird to ask them. I could ask everyone except her. She's dead. The Parakeets was her speech therapist at the hospital. The Bird was her neurosurgeon, the one who couldn't do anything. When she was a kid, she had two parakeets, Marie and Stéphane. It was Marie-Stéphane's fault if they always forgot

to put tea on her tray. Her neurosurgeon had a bird haircut. Disheveled. Like greasy feathers, silky chips.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

My condolences to his family, my condolences to his closest friends, my condolences. My condolences to his mother, his father, his brothers and sisters, his girlfriend, everyone who loved him, who knew him, everyone who spent even just one night with him. My condolences. I have to find a way to get motivated, I have to go to work, I have to. I have to because tomorrow I need to buy flowers, a big arrangement of flowers, flowers that I'll choose myself, that I'll arrange myself. I have to go to work, I have to put on shiny panties and huge stilettos and go to work, go shake my fringe, go seduce men and take all their money. I wouldn't have anything better to do if I stayed at home. I wouldn't have a cent, just half a pack of cigarettes and the desire to drink like never before, to allow myself to cry, to take hold of the feeling. And I couldn't stay here, at my place, mine that I share with Jackie and Alice and Carl and Patrick and his Anglophone friend whose name I can't remember. I couldn't take their strident voices and their drunken laughter, I couldn't take the contrast between myself and the others. At least at work I can cuddle up in this overblown image of myself, I can play the star dancer, the super sex bomb. The mischievous, the saucy, the *in-a-naughty-mood*. And make money, to buy flowers, to go, to find the courage to go to the funeral home.

RAPHAËLLE

I didn't go pay my dollar of existence to his family. She didn't either. We stayed rich, each at our homes. Family, I owe you two bucks. I owe money almost everywhere. Loonies here and there. I went to find her with her wheelchair. I got her out of her robe. She drooled everywhere. It was disgusting. If I were a bird I would stand beneath her mouth. Disgusting but full of nutrients. Leftovers from yesterday's gratin, streams of coffee, drool. An organic shower for ravenous birds. She didn't want to see Max in his black box. She wanted to go into the other room. I didn't understand at first, I followed her, I understood.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

It's crazy what your brain does in these kinds of situations. When someone asks you a question, there's a little hand inside your head that will immediately push aside the right curtain and grab the right material to share. When someone tells you that someone you knew is dead, you have no more resources, you have eight little hands, the medusa in your head, all your thoughts solidify, the curtains fall, you are naked in a desert of concrete and gyprock and you can't stop repeating to yourself: You must react, how to react, r.e.a.c.t. You rummage through your memories, you manage only to remember useless details, insipid moments, the places you spent your nights, the things your friend told you about him, the time you'd all watched a movie in his parents' basement, his parents' kitchen all done in wood, you simply cannot summon a memory of him, you never will again, it's as if he'd already begun dying way earlier, you remember his face the time you talked to him on the balcony but you can't remember his hands, his proportions, you can't recall the sweater he wore all the time. You remember that he'd written to you, but you don't remember anymore what it was and that makes you angry. But what makes you even

angrier is that you remember very well that the message was full of mistakes and it had irritated you. It makes you angry that you always prioritize the negative in the order of information, always and especially now. It's not the time to think of these things, it's the time to think nostalgically of good times, of bad, but not of the ordinary.

RAPHAËLLE

The boy in the black box, the black urn, they explained to me, he was also named Stanislas and he died of brain cancer. The black urn. It was better that way. He would always be thirty-one. His brain was an unhappy Care Bear. Like Vickie's. That day, the rainbow that shone out of his shitty asshole almost didn't fade. That day, Vickie had a bulging eye. She was macabre and ruined. Completely white. Like a blank page. Stanislas had a complicated last name. Something Russian or Slovak. The foxes came into the building, I didn't open the door for them. The voice of Caprice and her shrill cunt stories. I'm happy that girl's far away from us in the hallway of the funeral home. Someone to look after the animals. The foxes will end up being shriller than her cunt. Soon we'll leave in the darkness. We'll hold Vickie's hands in the meantime. Vickie will end up being shriller than anyone in her silence. By day, you can penetrate people with silent contemplation. By night, in this case. Vickie wanted to wear black to walk with the night. That's what she said. She was always such a big liar.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

It's crazy, the things that are upsetting. We forced ourselves, we are still and always forcing ourselves, non-stop, to find interesting things to do, to live the big moments, big nights, big and open conversations, the epic, and in the end it's the simplest moments that shine through, the most banal, often just moments of silence, moments of just being in the same room as that person, doing something that doesn't require talking, or requires very little, sometimes a few words, a question, but never the response. You remember more of yourself with him than of him with you. You remember what you were wearing when you went out, but you don't remember the bar, or who was there or what happened, just that your American Apparel dress looked really good that night. Then, it flips, you remember that you'd stolen that dress, you remember from which location, Mont-Royal, that it was a chilly night and that you'd walked down the alleyway after leaving the store because you were afraid of getting caught and that a clerk would be following you down the street. You don't understand what you're doing thinking about American Apparel at a time like this. It's not like if you could start over again, if you could think better the next time – we only die once. Apparently when your friends die, you're only able to think about a stupid American Apparel dress and how you got it. You tell yourself you should have begun to feel sad and cry a good twenty minutes ago, but it's not like that can happen on command, and this is not the time to fake it. All of this comes from the purest sincerity. Clothes and clothes, it always comes back to clothes. It's heartbreaking.

RAPHAËLLE

I'm wearing a black dress. Vickie too. We're wearing black. I think black is charming. It's slimming. For her, it was more complicated. Everything was always more complicated. She did

so many things at once, said and cried so many things at once. It was the festival of mourning, of exclamation points. She looked at the urn and promised the lady she'd stop smoking. Too much death. She's like the sick people on the packages. Frail and yellow. Urea, nicotine, clearly. To dry, to crumble, to smoke. She was no longer a girl. She was a fragment. A little amalgam of over-seasoned flesh.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

You tell yourself it isn't worth it to cancel your shift to grieve because you don't really see this grief coming. You tell yourself that you'll find the drive to get motivated and to go exhaust yourself in this uncertain feeling. You make up your mind, you'll go to work. You get up, you put on your stilettos and your backpack, you decide to walk to the club to think a little, and then you go in, you get undressed, you're the first one on the floor. An hour passes, not a soul, two hours pass, one soul, forty dollars. You're sitting on a bench next to the DJ booth and you can't stop looking at yourself in the mirror, finding yourself ugly, noticing that your hair looks greasy, you pull it up in a ponytail, you braid it, you undo the braid, you sweep it to the side, you go downstairs to your dressing room and put on a little hairspray, you go back up, perch on another bench, and it's the same choreography, rewind, play, over and over. Suddenly you can't lie to yourself any longer, you have greasy hair, you're not pretty today, you are a sexual zero today, your friend died today, there's no money to make here. You freak out. You do your little act, you go see the boss, walking toward his office you think how you'll have to make something up in order to leave earlier, that you're on the rag, that you have bad cramps, but you don't really want to lie to him either, you tell him that there's no money to be made here and you don't want the

money enough anyway to keep up this hair choreography all night. He tells you to never come back to his bar, you say thank you and go home. When you climb the stairs to your apartment and hear a concerto of voices through the door, you say fuck and go inside.

RAPHAËLLE

Isabelle had cut her hair and her mother had done her armpits and eyebrows. I'm wearing my brooch. The series recreates itself.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

It's the G21 in your apartment, there are more people than chairs. The neighbor calls to complain. That lousy second-last Daft Punk record is playing again and everyone's drunk, everyone's talking loudly, Jackie is shrieking, Alice tells you she loves you. You tell yourself that everything's not over, that you can sit down on a chair, you have the right to claim one, you pay the rent to be able to sit on a chair in your apartment whenever you want. You still can't manage to concentrate on your grief. You start sewing feathers on your corset for your Halloween costume. Always with the clothes, always these post-adolescents busy drinking beer and fucking everything up in your apartment, you can't listen to them talking anymore, always seeing the flaws and weaknesses in their conversations, but you never say anything, you suck it up and sew your feathers and you smoke one cigarette after another, your eyes sting but you still don't cry. Don't want to talk about it.

RAPHAËLLE

Jackie and Alice arrived. Caprice dragged her new boyfriend along. She introduces him to Jackie and Alice. The foxes were annoyed. Vickie never meets the kind of boy who does everything for the girl he loves, like in the movies. She put the film in backwards. She woke up without her clothes in a bathtub near the Cadillac metro. She'd been lied to, drugged, robbed. There are some things for which panties are just decorative. I put my camera in its case, I take a photo of my camera in its case with my cell phone. I send it to the Musée d'art contemporain. In my dreams. I prefer the sticky drool that hangs from Vickie's mouth to the complete sentence. I'll wipe her mouth, even if she hates that.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

Tommy and his co-worker Magella show up with a tiny bottle of rum and things to say. You don't know them, you meet them. You talk a little. You learn that nobody knows the Anglophone Mexican guy sitting at the other end of the table, that Alice's boyfriend met him on the street and decided to bring him along. The Mexican guy has the eyes of a killer or a rapist, you get paranoid, it gives you a little something to be dramatic about, you tell yourself that you could go through fear to get to grief, but it's in vain. Nothing works. Jackie does her flirty little tease routine, as usual; there are guys around so something clicks in her ditzy little brain. She stands on her chair and shows her ass. She tells stories about being naked and drunk in places where you'd also been, stories that you've heard a thousand times too many because you were also there

fifty percent of the time. She shouts, she talks about music with Magella, she knows everything, she knows all about music, she interrupts everyone to share this knowledge that you've heard her spill again once again a thousand times too many because you already knew it all. You're sick of hearing it. You say to yourself: Get your clothes on, get out of this smelly apartment, go to L'Esco, drink a beer and think. So you put on your coat. Tommy and Magella were having fun chatting with you, they tell you they'll come join you there after their last drink. Jackie shrieks meeee tooooo, you think fuck, you hope she passes out on the table, you'd like to knock her out, but that's just it, the problem, she's already basically out for the count. Wanting to marry rich men and not being able to, that's her drama. You don't want that to be yours but you live with it, she's up your ass and shaking her own in your face all the time. Now you're outside. Now you're at L'Esco. Still no grief, still with the clothes. You check out what people are wearing in the bar, you think how that's the only thing you're able to remember, so you meticulously note all the buttons on all the jackets and all the belts of all the pants, tattoos of cat paws on breasts, glasses with no glass, leather boots. Jackie and the others arrive, you have a feeling that Jackie's going to touch her breasts in public, and you feel like Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, like every day. Tuesday, Thomas died, Jackie was touching her breasts in public, I bought myself a two-foot rose to boost my morale. Outside. Cigarette. Everyone follows. You talk with Tommy. You think his name is Thomas because your brain is winking at you but you only notice this later, so you never call him by his name. You don't want it to hurt. It sucks when it hurts in public and you might as well touch your breasts too like a girl gone wild for all that would do. *Last call*. You slam back your drink. You go back to your place with Tommy and Jackie. You "borrow" a dozen beer from Alice and Patrick, you leave them a twenty on the bedside table. Jackie wants to watch *Toy Story 3*, you put on *Toy Story 3*, you don't watch it, she falls asleep, you talk. You talk

all night and it feels good to talk. Thomas-Tommy is interesting, he lived on the street, he doesn't seem like a junkie, he wasn't one, it figures. I find him sexy and I kind of want him, but I don't want to think about it. There's a girlfriend at his house sleeping all alone in their big bed. Normally, you don't give a shit about morals, but you think that you can't not give a shit today, it would be too many things to deal with at once. Still no grief. Thomas-Tommy leaves. You fall asleep proud of yourself.

RAPHAËLLE

I'll go by and see her tomorrow. Her new hobby: pacing along the walls. Someone has to be there to interpret the silences in the other rooms. She's there to interpret. I just read. Outside of myself, I read. So many painful reasonings, so many magnetic resonances. It sounds almost the same, but it's completely different. The resonating takes place in a huge machine. The reasoning doesn't take place at all. There's no machine for that. It doesn't exist yet. There would have to be a machine with a bunch of arms and metal chains. It would have to be just for me. A single serial number and my hand to write it down. No calm, no expression on my face.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

You wake up from one of the best, one of the worst wet dreams of your life the next afternoon. He was there and you jumped on each other in secret. He had a cock that was eight inches long and three inches wide and he was a fucking great kisser and God the sex was good, you're still

vibrating from it when you wake up. All this makes you angry because it's not possible. Someone is dead, someone you knew is dead and it doesn't stop you from going out for a beer with friends, it doesn't stop you from having an impossible wet dream where there's a guy with a fucking watermelon for a penis. You say to yourself how when you die you would like it if people couldn't do things like that, for it to have more of an effect on them. You want, you really want to be able to be a good example, but you can't. You're sad, but not sad enough. The one who died, you never knew him too well, you just kind of knew who he was. The lack of substance of this relationship stops you from having any real emotions, a real sadness, from experiencing real grief. All you can do is offer your condolences to his family. Buy flowers, say “my condolences” and take people in your arms as needed. But when you think of it, you tell yourself that if someone in your circle was to die and tons of unknown faces came to perform this little number for you, it would just end up making you angry, it'd be insulting that nobody shared your pain, your loss, your distress. It'd be insulting that they showed up with beer breath and a hard cock in their eyes.

RAPHAËLLE

I emptied out the contents of the brown envelope. Clothes, black headphones, friends. A hundred fennec foxes for each one. The friend is dead. Her friends too.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

Thomas wrapped a zip-tie around his neck. At that moment, on my computer, Uffie was strolling through her Youtube video⁵, pushing doors and extras out of her way. Thomas hung himself with the zip-tie around his neck. On my computer, I was writing: Ryan Gosling is so sexy. Thomas dead, waiting for someone to discover his body, and at that moment I was buying big white feathers, a white tutu and a mask for my swan costume in a store on Rue Mont-Royal. Always back to the clothes. And then always these contrasts, always this makeup. Such is my drama: always caught up again in the vulgarities of life, early or late, if not today then tomorrow, if not right away then soon. I will never be able to write beautiful love stories, never with any ease anyway. I will always have to push doors and extras out of my way, cry wolf, and on top of all that, bitch and whine and dramatize it all.

⁵ I supplemented the text here, adding “strolling through her Youtube video” to make clearer to the reader that Gendreau is referencing a particular music video by Uffie, an electronic musician.

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

My liver still aches.

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

I'm twenty-three. Why does my liver ache?

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

I'm dizzy. My heart is beating way too slowly.

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

My body is still scrap.

I wonder what it would be like, to die, or what it would be like to come within a hair's breadth of it.

I imagine stop-motion to the telephone, just before-

Like that.

In my mother's living room.

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

My bottle of water is empty. Two sips left.

Two bars left on the battery of this life.

Really not cool.

I burp, *what the fuck*.

Maybe I'm reacting to the chili, after dinner nap.

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

It feels like a full day has passed every time I open my eyes.

It's all mixed up, it's contradictory.

It's like I was waking up and falling asleep at the same time.

Oreo, three.

White sleep.

I close my eyes and I keep them closed a long time.

PAVILION C

VICKIE

Every day since the twenty-second treatment, I think I'm going to die on the X-ray table, that my heart is going to leave my chest, that it'll explode. Panic attacks. I always have to keep my back arched, exaggeratedly arched. My back catches up with me; my illness catches up with me. It usually happens after I've eaten. Palpitations, eyes ringed with dark circles, feeling like a heap of organs with a fuse. It's finished, it's all over. I have to swallow more pills more often to avoid feeling like I'm dying. It's not made up, all this. Nothing here is made up. I'm telling you everything. I go down to the fifth basement, I scan my card so they know I'm here. Vickie Gendreau is wanted in Room L. I go. I wait in one of the two dressing rooms. These rooms are for the people who have to wear a gown for their treatment. I get to stay dressed. The technician girls like what I wear. I always get at least one compliment. That's what girls do when they meet other girls for the first time, give compliments. It's like an automatic mechanism. Dominic usually comes to get me. Today, it's Alex. We're ready, you're ready, let's go into this room and use this machine. Let's try to save you. Alex has long hair in a ponytail and now that I think of it he looks a bit like a bird. I can give compliments too, I'm a girl. A nervous rabbit of a girl, complete with frenzied heartbeat. Dominic went on paternity leave. I feel bad, I didn't ask him any questions. Is it a boy or a girl? What's its name? Just congratulations, and it's been a pleasure. It's been awkward between Dominic and me ever since I said to him as I lay down on the machine: Well, let's go, pin me down on the table, Dominic. They put a white mask with holes in it on my face. The technicians leave. Alex speaks to me over his microphone. The treatment lasts fifteen minutes. Around seven minutes, I start to taste metal in my throat. I have eight more treatments to try to identify this taste.

MAXIME

You didn't come to my funeral or to the celebration of my life. Vickie, I'm dead. I hope you are too. Do you have a number for good MDMA? You can't find it at the grocery store here.

CATHERINE

Why do you have an inflatable doll in your arms, mademoiselle? Where are you going like that? I pass the dépanneur. I end up at Féérique's daycare at night. It's closed. I leave Inflatable Vickie on the pavement and cry. My nose full of snot. It's not pretty. A nightingale perches on my shoulder. I blow my nose with it.

MIKKA

I'm sleeping. I wake up with a start. A boot flew at my head. That'll do it. I get up slowly. There's no coffee left. I get dressed to go buy some. A brown envelope waits for me on the doorstep. There's a red car double-parked. The neighbour is getting a poutine delivered. It's Sunday, it's the day after yesterday, it's her time.

STANISLAS

I go down on Samantha at my place while you do your chemo in your bath. I sent you like ten postcards while I was travelling in the U.S. You told me you'd pinned them up on an ugly IKEA canvas with earrings. You told me that when you were still speaking to me.

VICKIE

Today is July 22, 2012, I'm at the Hôpital Notre-Dame. On May 21, 2012, I was onstage in Rouyn, busy shaking my ass, it was my mother's birthday but *turns out* it was Pauline's birthday too, the nurse who takes care of my blood work, and it was also the birthday of my radiology doctor, Dr. Bahary. June 6, 2012, I learned about my tumour, and it was my father's birthday. My father was afraid of having testicular cancer, very afraid; he'd secretly taken a bunch of tests. He showed up at the big results appointment and the doctor came out to call the name of the next patient. Alain Gendreau. Two men got up. There was another Alain Gendreau right there in front of him. This other Alain Gendreau didn't just have the same name as him, but also had an appointment right before his. They had to take out their health insurance cards so that the doctor could match the right results to the right set of balls. Tomorrow is my twenty-fourth treatment. It'll be followed by a massage. It's ten bucks for an hour. By Madame Verdi, who was also born April 14, like me. She remembers it for the *Titanic*, which sunk on our birthday, but not for Alexandre Jardin. She must really not give a shit about Alexandre Jardin, his last name is Austrian, it's a thousand times more glamorous. *Alexander Who? Who cares.*

TREATMENT 24.DOC

Machine, I feel like a heap of organs, I'm afraid. Alex is going to have to cut holes in my mask for my nostrils and mouth before tomorrow's treatment. I bought a CD to calm me down. I'm not taking any chances. I went to the Musée d'art contemporain this afternoon. I'd forgotten my hat and the sun in front of the entrance to the museum was relentless. I went into the shade to smoke my cigarettes. The shade made me think of you, machine. I'd like to film you in action. Maybe I should ask my mother to stay with me in the room during the treatment and talk to me. I'll take deep breaths beforehand and during. You exhaust me and you crush my will to live. I feel like a heap of organs with a fuse.

VICKIE

Stanislas, Man I Love Who Doesn't Love Me Edition 2012, I can't talk anymore, about everything, nothing, my treatments. My daily life. Man of my life but me not the woman of yours, I already spend too much time on Facebook because that's where I meet up with you, it's on Facebook I was going to wait for you. Wait for you to log on so I could talk to you about the new butterfly, the big swallowtail, wait for you to log on to talk to you about my room, wait for you to log on to talk to you about my day, my rose tea, my dark chocolate cookies, everything that livens up my days, in the most infinitesimal detail. My lemon cakes and Isabelle's and my stepfather's, and compare them. Laugh at you, with you. Describe for you in detail the *Zoo* exhibit at the Musée d'art contemporain. The sleeping owl, the crabs that devour themselves, the human skulls set with stones. I feel it, how it's difficult to live without you today. We should have been on the road to Sudbury right now. I would have made cookies for the trip. I would

have made sandwiches, the crusts cut off. I would have brought electronic cigarettes, the ones that Francis gave me so I'd smoke less.

RAPHAËLLE

She had the same birthday as her massage therapist, she didn't go to Max's funeral, the series was never recreated. It was always there, wise, waiting for her, waiting for her imminent end. Me and my clothes, my clothes and me, I don't even know where to put myself in the sentence anymore. Do the clothes come first, even today? Today is nobody's birthday. Today, she died.

TREATMENT 25.DOC

The nurse gave me a blue pill before my treatment. I went in, I put my poem down at your machine feet. I gave the Grimes CD to the technician. Skip the first one. He'd made holes in my mask for my nose and mouth. He talked to me the whole time, or maybe it was the girl technician. In any case I know that I didn't see evil cats that looked like dental scans crowned with fur, unlike yesterday. I saw ink stains. It all seemed soft, soft, soft though. *Fuzzy danger*. Everything is in the blue pill. It came to save me for the rest of my treatments. I will have to write to it from now on. You understand, beautiful love machine. I have a silly grin and I chain smoke cigarettes. My coffee is hot. The air conditioner is on. My uncle came by this afternoon. My father is supposed to come by later. He'll leave me some cash. I've gotten pretty poor on welfare. When I was dancing, I could make up to three thousand dollars a week, in Vermont up

to five thousand. Eating well was enough of a luxury for me. I like cooking for my friends. They come to visit me in my sanctum of disease. I thank them with cookies or chicken thighs in Boursin cheese. I'm not dead yet, I'm not sick of dying but recovering takes a long time. Recovery isn't guaranteed, but we'll try anyway. We'll be the football team and all the cheerleaders at once.

ANNA

I want to make art with her radiation mask. I don't dare talk to her mother or Mathieu about it. It's still too early. I'll have to go to the radiation oncology department and ask. Can I have Vickie's mask, the one you made holes in, two for the nostrils and one for the mouth?

MATHIEU

Anna took her to the Musée d'art contemporain. Anna took her to the MAC. Vickie had a Mac. She bequeathed it to me. I put it on my chest. Her mother gave it to me. I emptied it.

TREATMENT 30.DOC

Sweet oval blue pill, you are so beautiful by day and you knock me out so well by night. You still my beating heart, my frenzied rabbit heart⁶. Oh sweet gentle pill, with your Viagra-blue complexion, your air of duty-free vacations, you cost me dearly. But oh, you do me good. You do what needs doing, you do it like you should.

VICKIE

It is July 27, 2012. It's Mathieu's real birthday. Every year he picks a fake birthday for himself, usually in September or November. We met on his real birthday. He'd pinned me up against the wall of a shop entrance at the corner of Pins and St-Laur. A short time ago, long ago, when we still wanted each other. Everything is better when it's cerebral rather than corporal. Want more numbers? I'm up to twenty four and a half pills today. I'm costing the state about three hundred thousand bucks for my treatment. My pivot nurse likes round numbers. I hate every kind of number. I like letters, initials, words (V.G. eats dead animals.) You close your eyes. They bring up the red lights at the back of the stage. "Living Dead Girl" by Rob Zombie starts. A remix from the DJ's computer. If you don't have the original song, you gotta say so, babe. Mathieu is freaking out. He thinks that my fuck-me boots are an adequate choice. He's finally going to see me dance. I don't climb the stairs. I signal to the DJ. He puts on my CD, a little pissed off.

ANNA

⁶ The original text here reads: "Tu me calmes la patate. Tu fais de mon coeur une frite et de mon sang du ketchup, comme dans la chanson." As discussed in the commentary, there is no equivalent slang in English to "la patate" for "heart." I thus opted to refer back to another mention of the heart a few pages earlier, in which she speaks of being "une fille aussi nerveuse et cardiaque qu'un lapin."

Vickie comes into the room *dripping in gold*. *Dripping in*, yeah, that's British slang. Vickie's brain was spattered Pollock-style with freckles and I'm wondering what Picasso drew on his strudels. I watch her spin around her pole in her fuck-me boots and it calms me. This is how I want to remember her. Naked and golden.

MAMAN

I don't want to watch my daughter take her clothes off. She invited me, she made me come. She wants me to be able to remember everything. Me too. I want to remember her at five years old forever. Still innocent and virginal in that beautiful dress that made her look like a butterfly.

STANISLAS

I don't remember anymore why I stopped wanting to fuck her. All the guys are staring at her, wanting her. She's agile. Miraculous little feeling.

BROTHER

Go sister, you're the best. Red Car is dancing around the little pole in my hand. I keep thinking how Red Car could be anywhere, that it could be anyone here. You got me in. They know I'm too young but they don't seem to care. First dance of the afternoon shift. I wanna remember you just like this. Legs entwined at the zenith of the pole. My sister is more flexible than your sister.

VICKIE

The fast one's done, go for the slow. "The Hardest Button to Button," the Golden Filter remix, starts. I climb back onto the stage in my multicolored dress.

DJ

And now, please welcome to the stage the Very Sensual Lily! Followed back to back by the Excellent Kimora! Make some noise for a lesbian show! These girls eat each other out for real!

VICKIE

My dress looks like a harp, I play a riff, twist my nipple for the distortion. My pedals come up to my mid-thigh, more grip on the pole, I hang my head upside down. On the beat, always on the beat, I quickly descend to the floor. My heels resonate on the stainless steel, the echo strikes my chest, I slip off my g-string. On the beat, zigzagging it down low, on the beat. Always on the beat.

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

One thing a day, one step, one red agenda.

I'm going somewhere.

I'm talking to someone.

I close my eyes, I open my eyes.

I look out the window.

I close an eye, type with one hand.

A wisp of smoke.

My skin has many colors.

I sat out in the sun for more than twenty but less than thirty minutes, to look a little less sick.

I think about the sound recordist for *Archives de l'âme*, the documentary about the Nuit de la poésie in 1970.

I thought about him a few times this week.

I like imagining his voice.

His life spent capturing the voices of others on defective microphones.

Everything, absolutely everything, and nothing.

I'll remember everything, it's required.

Especially the silences.

I keep my eyes closed a long time.

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Appendix I

Pavillon B

VICKIE

C'est dehors devant le Pavillon B que je fume des cigarettes la nuit. Les pavillons communiquent de l'intérieur. Ma chambre est dans le A. Il fait froid, je porte une robe de chambre. Tu ne fumes pas, mais tu m'accompagnes. C'est moi qui vais mourir, pas toi, pas tout de suite. La luciole qui ne te lâchait pas s'envole. Une autre prend sa place. Comme pour te protéger de la fumée secondaire.

EYE'S WIDE PLOTTE.DOC

Je me souviens, les enfants partis, les lampadaires allumés. Je me souviens surtout pourquoi je suis partie. Caprice, la fille pas le mot, racontait quelque chose. Les filles, ça fait juste ça, raconter et chialer. J'ai un vagin et quelque chose me l'irrite profondément : les gens qui utilisent les noms complets des personnes connues de leur entourage pour se valoriser. Sérieux. Je te comprends, Samson, de me reprocher de raconter mes histoires en nommant toutes les parties impliquées même si le lecteur ne les connaît pas. C'est vrai que ça gosse. Mon ex s'appelle Mathieu, mon meilleur ami aussi. Je te comprends aussi, Caprice, tu veux avoir l'air bien ploguée. Mais calme tes nerfs. C'est juste un journaliste. Je ne te crois pas quand tu commences ta phrase par « mon ami Machin Truc ». Personne ne te croit. Tu tombes en amour avec un mec après avoir couché une fois avec. Ça ne manque pas. Tu as l'ami slack. Je ne veux même pas m'imaginer ce que ça aurait été si tu avais couché avec ton fameux journaliste. Tu aurais fait

quoi? Tu aurais rajouté un descriptif de six mots, un petit paragraphe sur la longueur et la substance de sa graine? Tu te rends compte? Et tu n'aurais toujours pas commencé ton histoire. Je sors ma passe de métro démagnétisée. Il y a une file. Devant moi, une fille et un gars, deux cells.

- J'ai lu mon livre confortablement dans le parc, dit le gars devant moi dans son cell.
- Il y avait un oiseau prisonnier de la vitrine, dit la fille devant moi dans son cell. J'étais dans le petit magasin au coin de Pap et Laurier. C'est là que j'ai acheté mon chapeau. Tu l'aimes, mon chapeau? Il est drôle, right?
- Jean Genet. *Les nègres*, c'est drôle à lire dans un parc au gros soleil sale.
- Je me dis qu'un bébé oiseau y a peut-être touché, à mon chapeau. C'est un peu pour ça que je l'ai acheté.
- J'aurais aimé pouvoir tremper mes morceaux d'ananas dans de la fondue au choco. Ouais, il m'en reste dans un tupperware. Je n'ai pas fini le livre. Aujourd'hui, je n'ai rien accompli.
- Je me suis mise à chanter « La vie en rose » de l'autre, là, la fille qui crie, cheveux courts et gros yeux. C'était trop cute avec mon chapeau.
- Nigga please.
- La Minnelli française.
- Un billet, s'il vous plaît.
- Oh, genre le mec devant moi. Mais je vais prendre deux billets. Je vais probablement rentrer ce soir.

Le garçon comprend : la fille le regarde intensément. Bonjour tension.

MAXIME

Le guichetier tend à Vickie une clé en lui faisant un clin d'œil. Il lui chuchote : Le rack à vélo, devant la station. Elle croyait bien avoir vu quelque chose briller et grouiller à travers la fenêtre sale, beaucoup trop sale, comme dans un jeu vidéo, un film soft porn des années soixante-dix, une course en slow motion : une quinzaine de fennecs frétilants. Il va lui falloir une plus grosse sacoche.

EYE'S WIDE PLOTTE.DOC

Tout le monde parle au téléphone. Mon cell est mort et personne ne m'appelle anyway. On ne m'a même pas appelé pour m'avertir que Max s'est tué. On me l'a appris par courriel. L'ami est mort et les gens arrêtaient pu de rire. Sur Facebook, les gens continuaient leur vie et moi de même. Je la continuais, à ne rien faire, à contempler mon fil d'actualité. Ça me rappelle quand ma grand-mère était à l'hôpital. Je l'avais appris par courriel. La vie, c'est fragile et ça continue. Raphaëlle était fâchée contre Caprice. « Elle organise le pique-nique en hommage à Max comme on organise un get-together. Elle veut juste boire avec nous. » Elle avait raison. J'ai donné une de mes bières à Caprice. Le jour du courriel, je mélangeais de l'orangeade à ma vodka. J'avais oublié d'acheter du jus. Les enfants des voisins faisaient plein de bruit. C'était la folie en haut de ma tête et dans ma tête. Les enfants se couchent tard. Je pourrais encore me rendre au dépanneur pour acheter dus. Au Vidéotron pour rapporter les films que je n'ai pas eu le temps d'écouter. En ce moment, je suis profondément végétale. C'est mon premier verre, j'espère que la vodka me donnera envie de prendre une marche. Les gens normaux prennent des marches. Après le souper, pour digérer, pour réfléchir. Avec les enfants, pour les emmener au McDo, par surprise. Au parc,

au magasin des souliers, partout, n'importe où par surprise. Ma cousine Anabel, à l'âge des enfants d'en haut, avait plus de souliers que mes Barbies. Un Panda personnel dans son placard, ça ne rentrait même pas tout dans le placard. Je me souviens de l'allure chaotique du vestibule. Je me pointais quant je n'étais pas invitée. À Noël, c'était toujours bien organisé. Dans ma tête, ces enfants sont deux, ils ont le même âge, ceux d'en haut je veux dire. J'aimerais aller prendre une marche. Max est mort. Il s'est suicidé. Ils se suicident tous tout le temps. Nous menons des vies difficiles, les amis et moi. C'était un ami éloigné. Il s'est suicidé quand même. Dans ma tête, les enfants d'en haut sont diaboliques. Ils sont dans mon entourage. Deux petites filles qui crient et sautent sans arrêt. Des parents suicidaires. Des futures cheerleaders expressives, des bimbos un peu intelligentes, juste assez, des extraverties un peu verbeuses, des drama queens. Pour le moment, ce sont juste deux petites connes qui crient et sautent. Je me demande ce qu'il se passe en vrai au-dessus. Ce que c'est, la vraie vie pour ces gens. Je suis restée connectée à Facebook toute la journée. J'ai regardé défiler le fil d'actualité. La vie est vulgaire et elle continue. Je ne raconterai pas ce que les gens disaient. Je ne suis pas sur cette terre aujourd'hui pour être factuelle. Max s'est pitché en bas d'un viaduc. La veille il m'avait demandé si j'avais un numéro pour de la MDMA. Je n'en avais pas. J'aurais peut-être en avoir un et je devrais avoir plus que juste la vieille bouteille d'orangeade pour mélanger avec ma vodka. La Smirnoff, ça ne se boit pas straight.

La mort d'un ami non plus. Je n'ai même pas un litre. Samson me dit que ce que je bois, c'est de la sangria d'étudiants. Je trouve ça drôle et ironique mais je n'ose pas rire.

Je n'ose plus lire grand-chose non plus. Je sus pas mal inutile. Ce n'est pas grave.

On me mange le bagel. Je suis une étudiante fumée.

Ne jamais rentrer à l'école, juste s'y être préparée.

MAXIME

J'ai commencé par balancer un fennec en bas du viaduc, puis j'ai continué, deux, trois, deux centaines, puis trois. Elle les attrapait tous avec sa grosse sacoche. Fourre-tout inépuisable. J'ai sauté mais il n'y avait plus de place dedans. Sorry.

POULIN ROUGE.DOC

Dans la marée étudiante en révolte, il n'y a pas de pancartes avec des fautes. Il n'y a pas de petit îlot de lumière rouge pour indiquer où se trouvent Stanislas et sa nouvelle concubine dans la foule. Il n'y a pas un petit regroupement de féministes frustrées autour comme je me l'imaginai, de femmes austères qui jugent et ricanent. Pourquoi personne ne juge et ricane? J'aurais dû porter une jupe, j'aurais pu ricaner, moi. Ça aurait fait pareil. Je ne juge pas. Je ne serai jamais suffisamment grande pour juger. J'aimerais tant être austère et frigide. J'aimerais être conne et moche aussi. J'aimerais ne pas réduire le monde qu'à deux adjectifs. Je ne veux même pas m'imaginer les miens. Ça ne serait pas des adjectifs flatteurs. Peut-être que je suis austère et frigide, finalement. Nous marchons contre l'adversité. Nous sommes tous décorés de rouge à notre manière. Le rouge, c'est dans mes yeux tout le temps. Ils étaient bruns il y a quelques semaines, mes yeux. Comme ce qu'on laisse choir dans la cuvette. C'est tout de même une couleur plus encourageante que le rouge. J'ai pleuré plus que les larmes de mon corps. À cause de ce garçon. Nous sommes bien des choses. Moi, je suis attendrissante et pleine. Mais vaine.

Comme cette foule : vaine. Dans mon quotidien, vaine. Je ne me trouve plus jolie. Je pleure encore ma crème de maïs raté, je pleure tout le temps tout. Je pleure avec mes yeux, avec mon nez, avec ma bouche. L'adjectif possessif est ainsi répété parce que j'ai souvent l'impression d'être une étrangère pour ma propre face. Je fais rentrer ces yeux dans mon propre visage puisque ces yeux m'appartiennent, pour ne pas l'oublier, pour ne pas cesser d'exister, pour avoir un regard. La réalité m'ennuie. Elle me déçoit. J'aimerais m'appeler Samantha. Je me fâche contre ma mère. Pourquoi pas Samantha? Elle ne répond pas, plus, je la déçois. Elle me cherche dans le journal sans me trouver. Demain, je lui dirai : Regarde, maman, je suis quelque part dans cette foule. J'espère que le headline ne sera pas trop méchant. Quelque part dans cette foule. Il n'y a pas d'indicatif régional pour contenir ma tristesse. Je pourrais aller travailler loin d'ici, loin du garçon, mais je serais toujours aussi mélancolique. C'est tout l'univers qui est noir nihilisme. Je vois dans la foule des hippies avec des grosses trompettes de plastique. Ils font du bruit. Mais encore. Tout le monde fait du bruit. Personne pour entendre. On ne peut pas entendre les photos, on peut juste les mettre dans le journal avec des headlines méchants. Je vais prendre une photo avec mon cellulaire. Oh, c'est vrai, je n'ai plus de cellulaire. Je ne saurais donner le numéro de téléphone de ma mère au policier si je me faisais arrêter. Il faut que je reste tranquille. Bien loin des headlines. J'aimerais être un peu méchante. Les hippies n'en finissent plus avec leur bruit. J'allonge les bras. Mon bras est infiniment long. Mon bras, c'est un ruban. J'agrippe une trompette et l'amène à ma bouche. J'ai quelque chose à dire, moi aussi.

Dans la foule, il n'y a pas de regroupement de danseuses nues avec leurs pancartes MA CHATTE EST CONTRE LA HAUSSE. Il n'y a pas de journalistes avec des plumeaux dans le cul. Il n'y a pas de dormeurs, pas de sérénité, pas une goutte de rosée. Dans la foule, il n'y a pas

de cerisiers. Il n'y a pas de toilettes. Il n'y a pas de file à la bibliothèque. Il n'y a pas de file au dépanneur.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux. Je suis au dépanneur pour m'acheter du jus de cerises noires.

MAXIME

Derrière, du bruit dans le frigo à bière, des petits cris. Des fenecs, des caisses mixtes de fenecs, des fenecs zéro pour cent. Elle prend une caisse de douze fenecs au thé glacé.

POULIN ROUGE.DOC

Le hippie à qui j'ai arraché la trompette part en taxi pour la retrouver. Mon chauffeur, mon chauffeur de danseuses nues, me dit que, si je suis poétique, lui c'est un poème. J'ai envie de pleurer. Je pleure. Je fais ce qui me tente. Je suis une princesse. Royaume trash, mais princesse quand même.

- Où allons-nous, mademoiselle?
- Pas à l'école.

VICKIE

Il y aura toujours une agence de recouvrement pour me réveiller le matin. Il y aura toujours un chaudron avec quelque chose de pourri dans mon frigo. Il y aura toujours quelqu'un pour me

détester. Quelqu'un pour me niaiser au téléphone à trois heures du matin. Quelqu'un pour me traiter de salope devant ma famille. Quelqu'un pour me voler mon verre, quelqu'un pour me voler ma sacoche.

POULIN ROUGE.DOC

Sortie boulevard Moody nord.

On passe par La Plaine, Jane.

Arriver à un bar de danseuses en pick-up rouge de red neck : *check*.

Être triste : *check*.

Écrire des nouvelles érotiques inédites pour Stanislas : *check*.

Client qui sent le patchouli : *came*.

Lip-syncher les paroles de Sexy Sushi sur mon stage : *check*.

Faire un stage sur « Raise your weapon » et lever la jambe pendant le refrain : *check*.

Client qui conduit une grosse Benz : *came*.

Boire un Monster Nitrous jaune en deux gorgées : *check*.

Manger une salade d'endives en trois bouchées : *check*.

Jeter les restants de crevettes au sésame du restaurant : *check*.

Aller à des funérailles en bébé doll : *check*.

VICKIE

C'est Raphaëlle qui me l'a prêté, le bébé doll. Stanislas Merdier, Anne Archet and 8 others have tweets for you. Mais c'est tout ce qu'ils ont pour vous. J'ai rencontré un client qui avait la machine Enlarge your penis. Un de mes condoms a rencontré son pénis, son argent mon portefeuille, et plus tard dans la journée ma face a rencontré la porte fermée de la poissonnerie. They have gazouillis for you. That's all they'll ever have for you. Consider yourself chanceuse, fille. Réponds quelque chose de witty. Dis oui sans cesse sans connaître la question. Dis oui et sautille. C'est épuisant chanter et ramer en même temps. Tu as le droit à une pause, fille, take a break. Mange ta granola, bois ton café. Écoute ta grosse musique énervante, énerve-toi, mais n'oublie pas que tu dois t'occuper des animaux. Les speakers crachent, les fennecs dansent. On s'énerve. Il se passe quelque chose d'important. Une bibitte noire chille non loin d'un fennec. Ce n'est pas comme un chat, un fennec, ça ne chasse pas les bibittes. Ça danse. Félix Cartal donne le beat. Le fennec se fait aller la patte, la bibitte aussi. J'ai Félix dans mes écouteurs. La bibitte est dans les cheveux de Raphaëlle soudainement. Je croyais qu'on était ailleurs et que c'était une broche. Je suis tout le temps surprise, tout le temps perdue. Je suis tout le temps à l'hôpital, d'habitude. Mais Raphaëlle m'a sortie aujourd'hui. Super surprise. C'est les funérailles de Max aujourd'hui. Elle a amené plein de beau linge noir. Je ne me souviens même plus si je lui ai demandé, si j'ai été polie. Je ne me souviens de rien. Ça m'amuse, de manquer des bouts. Il manque des bouts à tout le monde. Moi, je me souviens de tout, d'absolument tout. Me souvenais. Les temps de verbe, ça fait mal. Surtout quand ça te regarde et que c'est toi qui l'écris. J'ai choisi le bébé doll dans la pile de linge noir. Je suis allée aux funérailles avec ça sur le dos. Oui, je suis ce genre de fille. Un peu salope. Tu aimes me haïr.

Je suis au Kingdom, coin Saint-Laurent Sainte-Cath.

Mindy et Trevor analysent mon corps avec leurs mains en glu.

Nikky est belle.

Plus belle que moi.

Plus fluide que moi.

Je tombe partout.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

Je suis à NewYork.

Devant la cage des fennecs, au zoo de Brooklyn.

J'obtiens une permission spéciale pour les flatter.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

Je vois l'Autriche, je rencontre Ulrich Seidl.

Il me parle de son prochain film.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

Je suis dans un show noise avec les dudes

de Granular Syntheis.

Je ferme les yeux.

Je garde les yeux fermés longtemps.

Je ne ferai rien de tout ça.

Dimanche je vais aller au Beautys avec les amis

Boire un milkshake Cookies & Creme.

Ça, je le ferai.

Les yeux ouverts, grands.

À Stanislas, je lègue.

Ces deux textes,

un chat au piano

et deux centaines de fenecs.

STANISLAS

Je passe pour un chien sale. Elle dit qu'elle a pris plein de douches à cause de moi. Mais au fond j'ai su mériter son amour, jusqu'à la fin. Il faut bien quelques sens uniques dans une ville pour nous faire apprécier les rues à deux sens. Boulevard Love. Beaucoup trop intense comme fille. Trop de passion en une seule fille. Je l'ai rencontrée dans cette librairie. Je reste devant la porte, je ne peux pas rentrer, c'est fermé. Il pleut quelque part dans le monde.

STARGIRL SATAN.DOC

Je ne serai pas cette fille conne là. Je peux être toutes les autres, juste pas celle-là. Je ne vais pas changer ton nom dans mon livre dans l'espoir qu'un jour tu me reparleras. Je vais rester le diable. Le diable qui fourre toutes ces petites filles connes dans' tête une après l'autre. Je vais semer. Même si pas de terre, pas de terrain, même si une warp zone la jachère. Tu étais là, à côté de moi dans la librairie, juste là. C'était pour un lancement. Tu étais juste là, à une flexion de biceps. Et mes lèvres. Oh mes lèvres. Je lave les verres pour me changer les idées. Je me cache dans le petit vestibule pour laver la vaisselle et je pleure. Dire que je veux laver des verres pour être fine mais dans le fond pleurer, carrément mousser de la face. Les libraires me trouvent gentille, mais je pleure dans le fond. Le fond de vestibule. Juste au-dessus du nez, deux robinets. Au moins ici, je suis en sécurité, personne ne peut me déranger ou s'en faire pour moi. La tête dans le sable et la vaisselle. Les petits verres scintillent. Je me demande si je pourrais remplir un bac à glace avec ce petit ton larmoyant qui me jaillit de la face. J'ai un bac en Gérer la Marde mais plus de place dans mon packsack. Trop c'est trop. Ma sacoche rouge est trop rouge. Mes

cheveux sont trop frisés. Et il y a trop de monde. Mes cheveux étaient frisés comme ça quand on s'est rencontrés.

STANISLAS

C'est au Port de tête que j'ai rencontré Vickie. J'étais en couple avec Alexie dans le temps. Son nom ne me disait rien. Elle disait que j'avais l'air affreusement prétentieux. J'ai plugué leur Gala de l'Académie de la vie littéraire au tournant du XXI^e siècle. Je me trouve gentil. Elle me trouvait prétentieux. Je n'étais peut-être pas prêt à la rencontrer. Elle portait le même chapeau à paillettes quand je l'ai rencontrée à nouveau plus tard. Elle se souvient de tout, d'absolument tout, cette fille.

STARGIRL SATAN.DOC

L'homme de mes rêves, juste là, depuis tantôt. Je l'évite, je me tiens loin. À parler de son infestation de pigeons depuis tantôt, de sa vie sans moi, absolument sans moi. J'avais presque oublié que je suis le diable. Le diable n'est pas du genre à pleurer. C'est déjà ça. J'ai au moins ça d'humain. Je reste dans le petit vestibule quelques minutes. Je guette la porte, j'ai peur qu'il surgisse. Je vais verser ce qui me reste de face dans le lavabo encore. Je vérifie que je suis safe puis floc, ça remplit tout le lavabo d'un coup. Je sors sur la terrasse. Fumer toute seule. Loin des visages. Si je n'ai pas de visage, personne n'a de visage. Sujet à proverbe. Plus éprise de lui que lui de moi. Autre proverbe. Mes bottillons de cuir sont humides. Gros trou sous le pied droit. L'humidité ne connaît pas la gravité. Ma poche vibre. J'avais presque oublié que j'ai un cell moi

dans la vie, qu'on peut me rejoindre quand je mets du temps dedans. Ou quand je le retrouve dans le bordel de ma chambre. Complètement oublié que j'ai fait vibrer la poche des amis tout à l'heure. Les amis sont arrivés. Il faut que je les trouve. Ils sont à l'intérieur. Je rentre. Je cherche des capes. Je finis par trouver leurs trenches. Où est Stanislas? Regard dans l'espèce de miroir d'autobus perché entre les livres. Proust, Proust, Nietzsche et moi, pas une écrivaine. Bien loin de la littérature, je suis. Entre les deux rangées. À essayer de mémoriser les titres de films qu'on me suggère. Plus de vin. Plus de mélancolie. Plus de vin. Pas osé y toucher avant, mais là les amis sont là. Kleenex, petites capes blanches que l'on pêche aux boîtes colorées. Je suis colorée. Ma manche est un mouchoir. Pour le moment. On ressort sur la terrasse. Parce que je dois fumer. Ça me stresse, être triste. Crisse oui. Tu es là. Tu me demandes si je vais bien. Je trouve cette question ridicule. Je ne réponds pas. Je vais implorer. Je te dis que c'est ma fête samedi.

STANISLAS

Je relis tout ce qu'elle m'a envoyé par courriel, je relis son dernier courriel. Ça fait des mois, des années, longtemps. Je guette d'un œil distrait le paquet que m'a envoyé Mathieu. Je l'ai posé sur mon bureau. Je capote un peu. Elle m'aimait comme une folle. Maintenant, elle est morte. J'étais là à ses funérailles. Elle n'était pas présente. Son corps était dans la boîte noire. Elle est partie super vite sans dire bye à personne. Ce matin-là, au lieu de mettre une robe à paillettes, ma chemise que je lui ai donnée et ses éternels leggings noirs, et sa jupe en minou avec ce chandail affreux à motifs de chevaux... au lieu de tout ça, ce matin-là elle a mis une boîte noire. Finito.

STARGIRL SATAN.DOC

Je vais me cacher dans l'ombre et je cherche dans ma sacoche. Je trouve quelque chose qui se fume. Au moins je peux fumer. Le garçon se fout de moi, mais au moins je peux fumer quelque chose, quelque chose qui m'appartient à moi, juste à moi, cette cigarette, métaphore, allumette, mélancolie, gazoline. Me fumer moi-même. Et fumer ces foutus souvenirs. Mais ne jamais en voir la fin. Paquet illimité. Peut-être que c'est dans les choses simples qu'on doit se perdre. Peut-être que c'est juste là qu'on peut se perdre convenablement. Les amis s'en vont. Laure est là, elle, pour me rappeler que je suis tombée par terre tellement j'étais saoule et triste la dernière fois qu'on s'est croisées. Je me suis mise toute belle. J'ai envie de parler à Laure de mes problèmes de cœur. Elle va comprendre, elle, c'est une fille. Envie de dégueuler mes problèmes de cœur sur autrui mais je n'ai pas la guenille pour essuyer après. Je ne suis pas faite pour tout ceci. J'ai trouvé une veste à fleurs bleues dans mes boîtes cet après-midi. Je pourrais porter ça à ma fête. Fuck ma fête. Fuck le mois d'avril au complet. J'ai l'impression que je vais pleurer samedi. Parce que je pensais, oui. On avait fait des plans, oui. Tant de plans. Ma fête. Les pensées se répètent. Je sors de la librairie pour que personne ne me voie pleurer. Fleurs pour personne. Je vais tresser un collier de fleurs et offrir tout ce qui ruiselle en moi. À qui? À personne. Vie qui quoi? Vickie Personne. Je suis tout le monde et personne en même temps. Félix a l'air écœuré du monde autour. Je le comprends. Les escaliers devant. Je croise une fille. Elle me demande si je vais bien. J'explose ou j'implose, je ne sais plus. Je crois que je n'ai pas totalement lâché le morceau, que j'ai été saine jusque là. Pourquoi? Je ne sais pas. Je suis le diable, je sais ça. Deux autres filles sortent. L'une s'appelle Ariane, c'est la fille qui ressemble à Fifi Brindacier de dos, elle me dit qu'elle attend Laure et Stanislas. Pour aller à un show. Elle me demande comment je vais. Je choisis d'entendre un mot sur deux. Parce que ça semble plus ludique s'imaginer que savoir. On parle, on parle. Il sort. Tu sors. Elles s'en vont. Je sens que je vais pleurer. Je veux

que ça se passe plus vite. Tu portes une chemise. Elle a l'air de sentir bon. Tu sens si bon. Je t'embrasserais toute la nuit. Je passerais toute ma vie à te couvrir de compliments. Je n'ai rien dit de ça. Non. J'ai pensé aux lapins, à Radio Radio, à Ryan Gosling dans un jacuzzi. Il n'y a personne qui laisse sortir son bébé chat sur Mont-Royal la nuit. Le jour non plus. Le bébé chat lave sûrement de la vaisselle à longueur de journée dans le vestibule de l'entrée.

STANISLAS

J'ai fait l'amour à un paquet d'autres filles et je ne suis pas avare de luxure. Je suis sélectif. Ça ne me dérange pas d'être chaste un peu. L'été il fait chaud, c'est tout, c'est compréhensible. Ce n'est des affaires de personne, ce que je fais de mon corps. C'est un peur pour ça qu'elle a voulu qu'on cesse de se parler, je crois. Elle savait grosso modo et ça la chicotait de ne pas tout savoir. Je ne lui aurais pas répondu anyway. Tout ou rien avec cette fille. Je suis allé en Italie. Elle savait dire un mot en italien. *Uccello*. Ça veut dire oiseau. C'est inutile au sens pratique. Tu peux pointer des oiseaux du doigt et dire ce que c'est. C'est un registre d'enfant de sept ans. Tout au plus. Remarque qu'un oiseau, ça bouge, ça peut être difficile de savoir ce que la fille pointe du doigt si elle ne spécifie pas. C'est le genre de fille qui pourrait pointer un nuage en particulier, le petit touffu à jardin disons, et t'en parler pendant des heures. De longues descriptions dignes des grands romans ou des niaiseries alignées dignes des petits torchons. Fille tout-terrain. Elle aurait pu pointer le nuage, l'avion ou le lopin de stratosphère, mais elle a toujours centré son énergie sur l'oiseau. L'oiseau est important.

Pierre est sûrement au Bar inc. Je pourrais sûrement fourrer Pierre. Ce n'est pas important c'est qui, Pierre. Je pourrais fourrer l'univers. Certains payeraient même. Mais je ne le ferai pas. Non. Je suis juste capable de fourrer un inconnu saoule. Mais je finis de toute façon par parler de Stanislas tout le temps. De toi. On ne fourre pas. Je me fais consoler. Puis le lendemain, je regrette. Et le surlendemain je trouve le congélateur douillet. J'oublie. Tout sauf le garçon qu'il faut. Tu t'assois à côté de moi. Ma face capote. Sur la paupière d'en haut, une multitude de houppettes. Un char brun passe devant la librairie. Quelque chose me pénètre et ne veut plus sortir. Tu es juste là. Je ne comprends plus rien. Je dis des choses. Je répons. Les phrases jaillissent. Félix traverse la rue, je le vois à travers mes larmes. Je pleure. Oh. Je suis le diable. Mais le diable qui écrit bien. Mais le diable qui écrit pu. Alors écrire. Aller ailleurs. Vous partez. Oui. Vous partez. Je me retourne et tu es disparu. C'est correct, c'est mieux. C'est très bien comme ça. C'est con. Je suis conne. J'ai pleuré. Je n'arrive plus à arrêter. Mathieu traverse. Tout le monde traverse. Tout le monde me voit, mais je ne vois rien. Je suis plate, mouillé et triste. Les gens traversent et les gens qui traversent aiment ce que j'écris même si je n'écris plus rien. J'ai déjà assez écrit pour quelques jours encore. Je peux me permettre de ne pas faire grand-chose de ma soirée, de pleurer en écoutant de la musique triste. Mon spray net sent la lily des bois. Ma petite poudre pour les pieds aussi. L'humidité me le rappelle. J'ai rencontré une fille dans un rave qui s'appelait Lily. Elle avait un seul bras. On avait l'impression d'être des papillons. Lily avait juste une aile, mais papillon quand même. Aller dans mon cocon. Oublier le monsieur. Pour sortir et ne jamais finir saoule parce que trop triste. Trop triste pour oublier. Je tourne en rond. Je me souviens de tout. De tout. Pas lui. Moi oui. Pas toi. Pas grave. Plein d'amis. Dieu que j'en ai cassé, des oreilles. Je m'en fous. Les oreilles, ça repousse. Les cheveux

aussi. Les brûler, tiens. Une idée. Pour que les gens s'éloignent. L'escalier, c'est mon escalier.
Mon corps, c'est mon corps.

STANISLAS

Quand je regarde la vidéo de Mr. Peabody, le gentil bébé hibou qui prend son bain, je pense à elle. Dès qu'on me parle de fennecs, je vois son visage. Elle aurait voulu ça ainsi. *Uccello*, fennec. Vickie. Trois petits points. J'ai toujours détesté les points d'exclamation. Elle disait qu'elle avait arrêté d'écrire. Ce n'est pas vrai. J'ai tâté l'enveloppe brune que Mathieu m'a envoyée. Je suis pas mal sûr que j'ai senti une clé USB. Aujourd'hui, Vickie s'est habillée d'une clé USB et d'une enveloppe brune, il fait froid, c'est l'hiver. Elle est nue en dessous. Toujours nue, cette fille.

STARGIRL SATAN.DOC

Un ami vient me voir. Il me prend dans ses bras sans rien dire. Je lui demande pourquoi. Il me dit que j'ai l'air d'être sur le point d'exploser. C'est le bout de la soirée avec le dubstep. Je me mets à pleurer sans retenue. Feu d'artifice qui bande mou. Le chauffeur appelle. Il est là. Je traverse. J'embarque. Enfin. Pourquoi enfin? Pourquoi c'est grave? Je me suis mise belle pour personne, pour personne qui veut de moi en tout cas, j'aime un homme qui ne m'aime pas, pas moi comme je suis en tout cas. Tu ne veux plus me parler, mais tu veux bien me donner des coups de coude. Je ne suis pas ton ami de gars, dude. Come on. Je suis une petite fille cassable. Et j'ai eu chaude de partout juste à cause de ton coude. Tout ce désir et tout cet amour, oui c'est bel et bien de

l'amour, tout le kit gaspillé. Pour un garçon à qui je rêve encore tous les jours. Je vais me lover nue dans mes coussins et demain mon client va m'appeler pour qu'on soupe. Il va me dire que je suis belle, que le garçon est con de ne pas vouloir de moi, parce que je suis un crisse de catch pis toute. Le chauffeur de danseuses m'a dit, lui, pour me « consoler » que tous les garçons sont dans le fond des violeurs. Mais pas tous, monsieur. Je ne les connais pas, vos garçons, mais je connais celui avec le coude de tantôt et il est absolument extraordinaire. C'est pour ça que c'est aussi difficile.

STANISLAS

Je ne peux pas retourner à cette librairie pour pleurer à la même place qu'elle. Je ne peux pleurer sans la librairie. La librairie a fermé. Il n'y a plus d'étudiants. C'est l'apocalypse dehors. La fin du monde en hiver. Je me souviens que Vickie m'avait parlé d'un symbole maya qui représente un mort éveillé. Elle voulait se le faire tatouer sur la nuque. Je n'ai pas vérifié si elle l'avait fait. Je n'ai pas levé sa tête de morte de son petit coussin douillet. Son cercueil n'avait pas l'air d'un choix vestimentaire adéquat. Le petit coussin m'insultait avec sa moue douillette. Elle n'a jamais publié de livre. Je me demande si Mathieu va s'en charger. Je suis sûr qu'elle m'entend, qu'elle est réveillée. Je parlais à la plus jolie des plantes quand je lui ai chuchoté que je l'aimais bien quand même.

Je finis par rentrer la clé USB dans la slut qu'il fait. Je l'ai bien inspectée avant. J'ai mis un condom pour coucher avec elle. Je suis vigilant. Je me sens un peu mal. Dans la fenêtre Finder, je vois que cette clé s'appelle Nounajute. Je ne me souviens même plus du goût. Juste de l'allure. Un grain de beauté au centre, en haut, qui peut être pris pour un poil tellement il est petit. Je me

souviens. Elle me racontait que son beau-père avait pris le grain de beauté dans sa main pour une tache de chocolat. Il ne pouvait pas savoir. Je me demande ce qu'il penserait de moi. C'est un Italien. Les Italiens m'aiment. Je sais dire plus qu'un mot.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

Tu as dit : Je trouve ça cute une fille qui écrit. C'est comme un chat qui joue du piano. Tu as dit que c'était une joke, j'ai dit que ce n'était pas drôle. Je fais meow et je joue du piano. J'irais bien boire un thé avec toi, mais il y a un homme qui s'en vient « accorder mon piano ». C'est que je n'écris que par mélancolie et fureur, et ça ce n'est pas cute. Je ne suis pas cute quand j'écris. Je pleure. Je morve. Ça éclate. Pas cute. Pas meow. Mais dorénavant, oui. Je vais mettre du beau linge pour écrire. Je vais me friser les cheveux, me faire les sourcils, le bikini aussi. Je vais mettre de la musique de fille et sautiller. Je vais avoir l'air d'un plumeau sur l'ecstasy. Meow. Je vais porter mon écusson du festival de l'amour sur mon cœur. Ma poitrine va goûter la fraise ou la rhubarbe. La jugulaire inopinée pulse. Adjectif fancy suivi de verbe dont j'ignore la signification. Je suis cute, n'oublie pas. Les soldats auront des épées de mousse. Moi, je serai jolie. Je te dirai que ceci n'était qu'un rêve. Paupières colibris. Je vais te laisser tâter ma politique avec tes gros doigts poilus de mâle. La petite saucée nationaliste, avec fille à l'allure informée. Ça marche bien pour les autres jeunes femmes, le petit look activiste. Piano.

STANISLAS

Elle n'est pas toujours fine. Pas toujours fine pour toujours. Ça finira ainsi jamais. Je lui ai expliqué que c'était une joke. Je lui ai dit qu'elle déformait mes propos. Elle m'a répondu quelque chose de flou. J'ai compris que je lui avais donné envie de prendre une douche et qu'elle l'avait prise. Ses cheveux doivent encore contenir un peu de ce shampoing.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

Je suis certaine que ça t'est déjà arrivé à toi aussi. Toi qui as un vagin ou qui sais te l'imaginer. Personne ne va l'admettre. C'est trop personnel. Ça concerne que toi, le frigo et la nuit. Je ne suis pas gênée. Du front tout le tour du frigo. La nuit toute transparente. Je suis ce genre d'oiseau. Meow, piano. Tu te lèves pour aller boire du jus au carton. Pourquoi s'encombrer d'un verre, personne ne regarde. Boire en réfléchissant, c'est toujours messy. De la limonade Beatrice. Ça ne vaut pas plus que deux dollars. Ça ne mérite pas de fioritures, pas de cristal. Toi, tu en mérites indiscutablement, mais pourquoi s'encombrer, personne ne regarde. Tu bois donc quelques gorgées au carton. En robe de nuit. En ce qui semble chandail le jour mais devient robe la nuit. Linge slack. Mathieu dit que tu es jolie quand tu portes du linge slack. Meow, piano. La limonade déborde, tu as le menton tout luisant, le liquide coule sur ta peau. Sur le bedon, un point de contact avec la robe : on dirait que ton nombril a pissé. Ça continue de couler, de descendre. Ça arrête pile au sommet de ton mont. Tu es toujours à te tenir le dos cambré. Profession exige. C'est comme ça qu'on est cute en talons hauts, quand on boit du jus au carton en allant pisser au beau milieu de la nuit. Meow, piano. J'écris ces lignes le dos cambré.

STANISLAS

Ça ne m'est jamais arrivé. Je vais hocher de la tête, mais ça ne m'est jamais arrivé. Je dors nu. En boxers des fois. Je ne veux même pas m'imaginer ce qu'elle aurait fait de mes boxers si je lui en avais laissé une paire en souvenir. Je viens de vider le contenu de l'enveloppe sur le comptoir de ma cuisine. Ma chemise est tombée avec un bruit dégoûtant, comme une poignée d'épinards bouillis dans une assiette de porcelaine. Qu'est-ce que tu lui as fait, à cette jolie chemise, pauvre fille? Je repense au nom de sa clé USB et j'ai un peu peur. Je devrais peut-être mettre des gants.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

Mathieu dit que, si je passe trois jours installée dans le divan avec mon set-up actuel, je vais ressembler à la petite fille dans *The Grudge*. Ça, c'est drôle. Cambre ton dos, petit fille. Tape tes formulaires d'impôt le dos cambré. Tape tes petits textes fâchés le dos cambré. Pète ta coche le dos cambré. Meow, piano. Je n'ai pas essuyé la limonade qui a coulé par terre. Je vais me lever. Bonne à marier. Je vais cuisiner, un coup partie. Je prépare une batch de chili. Pour demain il faut que je trouve de l'anguille fumée. J'ai besoin de monnaie d'échange. Demain, je m'invite à souper chez lui, c'est décidé. Il ne m'invitera jamais de lui-même. Une anguille fumée contre du sexe. Du troc. Je pourrais l'attendre dans le salon pendant qu'il cherche de la musique, sortir l'anguille de son emballage, poser mon linge sur le divan, faire le pont et mettre l'anguille sur mon bassin, comme si c'était une ceinture. Femme table. Je suis folle peut-être mais ça me ferait bien rire. Lui aussi pourrait rire. C'est un Louperivois. Il est né là-bas, puis il est déménagé à Montréal, il peut comprendre. La poissonnerie est fermée. Ma noune est triste. Le chauffeur de taxi me dit qu'il y en a une autre. On y va. Meow, piano.

STANISLAS

Fuck. Pourquoi je ne t'aime pas? Sérieux. Tu es parfaite. C'est ça que tu veux que je te dise? C'est un peu toi qui choisis. Tu prends mes cordes vocales, tu en fais du macramé. Tisse, petite conne. Tisse toujours plus. Fais-moi dire tout ce que tu espères entendre. Tisse encore, plus fort. Alors que je fuck meow harder. Pas toi, une autre, une autre. C'est l'été, j'ai chaud.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

De l'anguille fumée, c'est moins long à faire cuire, qu'il a commencé à m'expliquer tantôt. De l'anguille de base, ça fera. Au point où j'en suis. Puis, je me dis que je pourrais l'accrocher au plafonnier du salon, fumer comme une cheminée, comme d'habitude, le tour serait joué. Prends ton temps, le four, j'ai plein de choses à dire avec mon corps à ton propriétaire. Je pourrais lui faire une danse. Ça m'aiderait à installer une distance. Je pourrais prendre une photo avec mon ordinateur. Oui. Pour lui proposer le souper. Tiens, un faire-part funky. Je pourrais écrire le mot ROCHE sur un post-it, me le coller sur le front et me tenir accroupie sur l'emballage de l'anguille. La tenir sous mon visage. Il fait noir dans la deuxième poissonnerie. Personne ne vend de poissons dans le noir. Ils vendent du poisson au IGA, que le chauffeur me dit. Je la pêcherais moi-même, cette foutue anguille, si j'avais le temps. On est passés devant une fontaine tout à l'heure. Être une anguille, je me tiendrais là. Go pour le IGA. Meow, piano.

STANISLAS

C'est faux. Je ne te crois pas. Tu n'aurais pas pris un taxi de quarante dollars pour zigzaguer d'une poissonnerie à l'autre. Ça aurait été si clément, t'aimer. J'aurais pu manger de l'anguille fumée tous les soirs. J'aurais été ton pimp. Je t'aurais envoyée partout, à travers le Québec au complet, pour que tu me ramènes tout ce que je souhaite manger. Gars roi. Va, jeune reine, va en Abitibi, c'est la saison de la chasse. Ramène-moi de la viande fraîche, fais-moi un ragoût. Bruits de chaudron. Ting. C'est prêt.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

Le chauffeur me dit qu'il me ferait danser, lui. Que je suis si jolie, si gentille. S'il savait comme je ne le suis pas assez, comme je ne le serai jamais assez. Je lui explique que mon client m'a dit que je devrais m'appeler Blanche-Neige, parce que j'ai les cheveux foncés et la peau blême. Je lui raconte que j'ai dansé pour un nain le soir même, que c'était si mignon. Le nain voulait me fourrer, ça c'était moins mignon. Les oreilles de ma mère se font faire une permanente. Cette semaine, je me suis étiré un ligament du pied. Je dois danser en botte cowboy. Semaine difficile. Mon portefeuille a si mal à l'égo que sa fermeture éclair a brisé tout à l'heure au moment de payer à la Brûlerie. Ce que je fais dans la vie? J'écris des livres, monsieur. Des livres que tout le monde peut comprendre. Oui, un peu comme *Twilight* mais mieux, plus poétique, disons. J'ai la peau blême, je suis un vampire, c'est obligé. Non, pas des livres de psycho-pop. Les parents du garçon de l'anguille sont psychologues. Non, ce n'est pas mon chum. Non, il ne m'aime pas. Oui, je suis accrochée. C'est l'homme de ma vie, monsieur, je ne suis juste pas la femme de la sienne. Le chauffeur me dit de le tutoyer, il va me faire danser. On arrive devant le IGA. Je dois tourner à gauche, puis courir jusqu'au fond. Meow, piano.

STANISLAS

Tu ne fais meow pour personne maintenant. Je n'en ai rien à foutre de ton journal intime.doc. J'ai envie de réagir.doc mais je ne le ferai pas. Je vais te critiquer. Je vais te dire ce que tu es vraiment et tout le monde va m'écouter parce que je suis encore en vie, moi. Tu dis que tu es personne et tout le monde en même temps pour faire cute, mais en réalité tu n'es rien. Tu es du pus, c'est ça que tu es. Du pus qui pourrit les mots et la littérature au grand complet. C'est ainsi. Accepte-le.

FUCK MEOW HARDER.DOC

Je suis une pute. Je fais la pute cette semaine. Pas le choix, trop de dépenses, et en plus cette histoire d'anguille. Mais il n'y a pas d'anguille ici. Il ne voudra pas de moi. Je ne vaux rien sans l'anguille. Meow. Je prends deux pots de bourgots dans le vinaigre. Ça vient de Baie-Comeau, c'est des mollusques. Ça baigne dans un liquide blanchâtre. Je vais devoir racheter des batteries pour mon dildo. Je vais mettre le pot sur une table de ma chambre. Je vais devoir me crosser en contemplant le liquide blanchâtre dans le pot. Rien n'a changé. Je suis juste plus pute que le mois dernier. Piano. J'irais bien te porter un pot de bourgots pour te regarder les sucer, mais il y a cet homme qui s'en vient chez moi « accorder mon piano ». Je cambre mon dos bien comme il faut et j'écris ce poème :

je bois de la limonade à deux piastres

et je t'aime

fuck meow harder

que je dégoutte

un peu

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

L'oiseau.

J'appelle Dr Boutiller L'oiseau.

Il est gentil.

Il m'a tenu la main.

Je cligne des yeux.

Le Decadron me fait enfler de la face et cligner des yeux.

Pour te donner une idée.

Hier mon oreiller, ça a été toutes sortes d'affaires

Ça a commencé par être un chat.

Puis, un chien.

Quand j'ai ouvert les yeux, j'ai vu.

Tout ce temps, c'était un oreiller.

Je suis encore à Notre-Dame.

Mon dîner arrive dans pas long.

Je vais m'asseoir sur la chaise.

Je vais être une magicienne.

Mon cul, c'est une colombe.

Je vais le faire disparaître.

À Raphaëlle, je lègue.

Ce texte pour Thomas,
son bébé doll qu'elle m'a prêté
et une centaine de fenecs.

RAPHAËLLE

On était amies. On se connaissait du secondaire. Je mettais mon alarme à cinq heures pour aller travailler. Elle, elle sortait de la job à cette heure-là. Pas le même rythme de vie. Mathieu m'a envoyé une enveloppe brune pleine du linge noir que je lui avais prêté. J'ai trouvé ce texte sur une clé dans la poche de mon veston. Je sais toujours quoi mettre, mais jamais quoi dire. C'était elle qui savait quoi dire. Moi, je suis juste bonne à copier-coller. À comprendre l'intensité. Mais pas à l'écrire.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

J'ai encore un ami qui s'est suicidé. J'ai un ami qui vient de mourir. J'ai un ami qui vient de s'enlever la vie. Ces mots tombent sur la chaussée. Thomas est mort aujourd'hui. Tu penses, mais tu ne penses pas. Ces phrases, quand c'était ton ami qui te les disait au téléphone, ce n'était pas trop pire, ça rentrait fort, ça faisait mal, mais ce n'était toujours que des phrases. Tu ne sais pas quoi dire, personne ne sait jamais quoi dire, tu n'as rien à dire, tu sais que tu n'es pas obligée de dire quelque chose, mais tu essayes, tu commences une phrase,

je n'en reviens pas que,

je me demande comment sa mère fait pour,

je me souviens de cette soirée dans le sous-sol de ses parents la fois que,

je me souviens du site Internet qu'il avait créé pour raconter son voyage de deux ans en

Chine et où il avait parlé de moi, de combien j'étais le fun et créative et de

combien il allait s'ennuyer de moi,

je me souviens d'avoir lu ses statuts Facebook, que ça m'avait fait sourire, qu'il avait l'air de s'épanouir,

tu réussis à dresser la liste des souvenirs, mais tu sais que tu es en train d'en oublier, tu te fâches contre toi-même, contre ta mémoire de poisson rouge, tu te fâches d'avoir cessé de lui écrire il y a cela deux ans déjà. Tu te demandes si tu aurais pu y changer quelque chose, si tu aurais su trouver les bons mots, panser une plaie ici et là, tu te demandes si tu aurais pu retarder son geste. Tu te dis que tu aurais pu l'appeler, que tu aurais pu lui demander son numéro, l'appeler une fois de temps en temps. Tu te dis que tu aurais pu l'appeler le jour même et le prendre par surprise, lui dire quelque chose de gentil, de simple et de sincère. Tu te demandes si ça aurait pu avoir un petit effet.

RAPHAËLLE

Ses écouteurs ne lui faisaient pas. C'était une fille faite pour des speakers. Je lui avais prêté les miens, les écouteurs noirs, ils sont dans l'enveloppe brune. Je me demande si sa cire d'oreille va se mélanger à la mienne. Je me demande si ses oreilles continuent à produire de la cire. Je pourrais appeler Les Perruches ou L'oiseau pour le leur demander. Je pourrais le demander à tous sauf à elle. Elle est morte. Les Perruches, c'était son orthophoniste à l'hôpital. L'oiseau, c'était son neurochirurgien à l'hôpital, celui qui ne pouvait rien faire. Quand elle était gamine, elle a eu deux perruches, Marie et Stéphane. Marie-Stéphane, c'était de sa faute s'ils oublièrent tout le temps de mettre du thé dans son plateau. Son neurochirurgien avait une coupe de cheveux d'oiseau. Les cheveux en bataille. Comme des plumes grasses, des chips soyeuses.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

Mes condoléances à sa famille, mes condoléances à tous ses proches, mes condoléances. Mes condoléances à sa mère, à sa père, à ses frères et sœurs, à sa blonde, à tout le monde qui l'a aimé, qui l'a connu, à tous ceux qui ont passé ne serait-ce qu'une soirée avec lui. Mes condoléances. Il faut trouver le moyen de se motiver, il faut que j'aille travailler, il le faut. Il le faut puisque je dois acheter des fleurs demain, un gros arrangement de fleurs, des fleurs que je vais choisir moi-même, que je vais arranger moi-même. Je dois aller travailler, je dois me mettre en bobettes lustrées, en gros talons aiguilles et aller travailler, aller me faire aller les franges, aller séduire des hommes, leur prendre tout leur argent. Je n'aurais pas quelque chose de mieux à faire si je restais à la maison. Je n'aurais pas un rond, qu'une dizaine de cigarettes, envie de boire comme jamais pour me permettre de pleurer, de me saisir de ce sentiment. Et je ne pourrais pas rester ici, chez moi et Jackie et Alice et Carl et Patrick et son ami anglophone dont j'ai oublié le nom. Je ne pourrais pas endurer leurs voix stridentes et leurs rires ivres, je ne pourrais pas endurer le contraste entre moi et les autres. Au moins, au travail, je peux me lover dans cette image boursouflée de moi-même, je peux jouer la danseuse étoile, la super bombe sexuelle. L'haïssable, la tannante, la in-a-naughty-mood. Et faire de l'argent, pour acheter des fleurs, pour aller, pour trouver le courage d'aller au salon funéraire.

RAPHAËLLE

Je ne suis pas allée payer mon dollar d'existence à sa famille. Elle non plus. On est restées riches, chacune chez soi. Famille, je te dois deux piastres. Je dois de l'argent un peu partout. Des huards par-ci, par-là. Je suis allée la chercher avec sa chaise roulante. Je l'ai sortie de sa jaquette.

Elle a bavé partout. C'était dégueulasse. Être un oiseau, je me serais tenue sous sa bouche. Dégueulasse mais plein de nutriments. Restants du gratin d'hier, coulées de café, bave. Douche organique pour oiseaux affamés. Elle n'a pas voulu voir Max dans sa boîte noire. Elle voulait aller dans l'autre salle. Je ne comprenais pas au début, je l'ai suivie, j'ai compris.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

C'est fou ce que ça fait un cerveau en de telles situations. Quand quelqu'un te pose une question, tu as la petite main dans la tête qui va directement écarter le bon rideau et qui se saisit de la bonne matière à vulgariser. Quelqu'un t'annonce que quelqu'un que tu as connu est mort, tu n'as plus de moyens, tu as huit petites mains, tu as la méduse dans la tête, toutes tes pensées se solidifient, les rideaux tombent, tu es nue dans un désert de béton et de gyproc et tu n'en finis plus de te répéter : Il fait réagir, comment réagir, r.é.a.g.i.r. Tu fouilles dans tes souvenirs, tu arrives juste à te souvenir des détails inutiles, des moments insipides, des lieux où vous avez passé vos soirées, de ce que ton ami te racontait sur lui, de la fois que vous aviez tous écouté un film dans le sous-sol de chez ses parents, de la cuisine tout en bois de chez ses parents, tu n'arrives pas à te souvenir de lui tout simplement, tu n'y arrives plus, c'est comme s'il avait déjà commencé à mourir bien avant, tu te souviens de son visage la fois où tu parlais avec lui sur le balcon mais tu ne te souviens pas de ses mains, de ses proportions, tu n'arrives plus à te rappeler du chandails qu'il portait tout le temps. Tu te souviens qu'il t'avait écrit, mais tu ne te souviens plus quoi et ça te fâche. Mais ce qui te fâche davantage, c'est que tu te souviens très bien que le message était bourré de fautes et que ça t'avait énervée. Ça te fâche que tu priorises le négatif tout le temps dans l'ordre des données tout le temps et encore plus maintenant. Ce n'est pas le

moment de penser à ces choses-là, c'est le moment de penser avec nostalgie aux bons moments, aux mauvais, mais pas aux ordinaires.

RAPHAËLLE

Le garçon dans la boîte noire, l'urne noire, qu'on m'a expliqué, il s'appelait Stanislas lui aussi et il est mort du cancer du cerveau. L'urne noire. C'était mieux comme ça. Il était toujours sur son trente et un. Son cerveau, c'était un calinours pas content. Comme celui de Vickie. Ce jour-là, l'arc-en-ciel qui sort du trou du cul de la marde s'est flétri pas à peu près. Ce jour-là, Vickie avait un œil bombé. Elle était macabre et maganée. Toute blanche. Comme une page. Stanislas avait un nom de famille compliqué. Un truc russe ou slovaque. Les fennecs sont entrés dans le building, je ne leur ai pas ouvert la porte. La voix de Caprice et ses anecdotes de plotte stridente. Je suis contente qu'elle soit loin de nous dans le vestibule du salon funéraire, cette fille. Ça fait quelqu'un pour s'occuper des animaux. Les fennecs vont finir par être plus stridentes que sa plotte. On va sortir dans la noirceur dans pas long. On va tenir les mains de Vickie en attendant. Vickie va finir par être plus stridente que tout le monde dans son silence. C'est par la contemplation silencieuse qu'on perce les gens à jour. À nuit, dans ce cas-ci. Vickie voulait porter du noir pour marcher avec la nuit. C'est ce qu'elle disait. Elle a toujours été une grosse menteuse.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

C'est fou ce que c'est fâchant. On se forçait, on se force encore et toujours sans relâche pour trouver des activités intéressantes, pour vivre de grands moments, de grandes soirées, de grandes conversations dans le blanc des yeux, de l'épique, et au final ce sont les moments les plus simples qui rayonnent, les plus banals, souvent les moments de silence, ces moments à juste être dans la même pièce que cette personne, à faire une activité ne nécessitant pas d'échanges, ou peu, parfois quelques mots, une question, mais jamais la réponse. Tu te souviens plus de toi avec lui que de lui avec toi. Tu te souviens de ce que tu portais quand vous êtes sortis, mais tu ne te souviens plus du bar, ni de qui que ce soit, ni de quoi que ce soit, juste que ta robe American Apparel t'allait bien ce soir-là. Puis, ça bascule, tu te souviens que tu l'avais volée, cette robe, tu te souviens dans quelle succursale, Mont-Royal, que c'était un soir frisquet et que tu avais marché dans la ruelle en ressortant du magasin puisque tu avais peur de te faire pincer et qu'un employé soit en train de te poursuivre dans la rue. Tu ne comprends pas comment tu fais pour penser au American Apparel dans un moment comme celui-là. Ce n'est pas comme si tu pouvais te reprendre, comme si tu pouvais mieux penser la prochaine fois, on ne meurt qu'une fois. Apparemment que, quand tes amis meurent, tu es juste capable de penser à une vulgaire robe American Apparel et de comment tu te l'es procurée. Tu te dis que tu aurais dû commencer à être triste et à pleurer depuis un bon vingt minutes, mais ce n'est pas comme si ça pouvait se commander, et ce n'est pas le moment de faker. Tout ça relève de la plus pure sincérité. Des guenilles et des guenilles, toujours que des guenilles. C'est navrant.

RAPHAËLLE

Je porte une robe noire. Vickie aussi. On porte du noir. Pour moi, c'est charmant, le noir. Ça amincit. Pour elle, c'était plus compliqué. Tout était toujours plus compliqué. Elle faisait plein de choses en même temps, disait et pleurait plein de choses en même temps. C'était le festival du deuil, du point d'exclamation. Elle a regardé l'urne et promis à la dame d'arrêter de fumer. Trop de deuils. Elle est comme les malades sur les paquets. Frêle et jaune. Urée, nicotine, carrément. À sécher, à émietter, à fumer. Ce n'était plus une fille. C'était un morceau. Un petit amalgame de chair trop assaisonnée.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

Tu te dis que ça ne vaut pas la peine que tu annules ton shift pour vivre ton deuil parce que tu ne le vois pas vraiment venir, ce deuil. Tu te dis que tu vas trouver la drive de te motiver et de te surmener dans ce sentiment incertain. Tu te décides, tu vas aller travailler. Tu te lèves, tu enfiles tes talons aiguilles et ton sac à dos, tu décides de marcher jusqu'au club pour réfléchir un peu, et tu entres, tu te déshabilles, tu es la première sur le plancher. Une heure passe, pas un chat, deux heures passent, un chat, quarante dollars. Tu es assise sur un banc à côté de la boîte du DJ et tu n'en finis plus de te regarder dans le miroir, de te trouver moche, de trouver que tes cheveux ont l'air gras, tu te fais une couette, tu te fais une tresse, tu défais tes cheveux, tu les balayes sur le côté, tu descends en bas dans ta loge y mettre du spray net, tu remontes, te perches sur un autre banc, et c'est la même chorégraphie, rewind, play, over and over. Soudain tu ne peux plus te mentir à toi-même, tu as les cheveux gras, tu n'es pas jolie aujourd'hui, tu es zéro sexuelle aujourd'hui, ton ami est devenu mort aujourd'hui, il n'y a pas d'argent à faire ici. Tu pêtes ta coche. Tu fais ta petite scène, tu vas voir le boss, en marchant vers son bureau tu te dis que tu vas lui inventer quelque chose pour partir plus tôt, que tu es dans ta semaine, que tu as des grosses

crampes, mais tu n'as pas envie de lui mentir à lui non plus, tu lui dis qu'il n'y a pas d'argent à faire ici et que tu n'es pas assez à l'argent de toute façon pour te taper ta chorégraphie de cheveux toute la soirée. Il te dit de ne plus jamais revenir dans son bar, tu lui dis merci et tu rentres chez toi. Quand tu montes les escaliers de ton appartement et que tu entends un concerto de voix à travers la porte, tu dis fuck and tu entres.

RAPHAËLLE

Ses cheveux, Isabelle les avait coupé, et sa mère lui avait fait les aisselles et les sourcils. Je porte ma broche. Les séries se reconstituent.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

Il y a le G21 dans ton appartement, il y a plus de monde que de chaises. La voisine appelle pour chialer. C'est encore le foutu avant-dernier CD de Daft Punk qui joue et tout le monde est ivre, tout le monde parle fort, Jackie parle aigu, Alice te dit qu'elle t'aime. Tu te dis que tout n'est pas terminé, que tu peux t'asseoir sur une chaise, que tu as le droit d'en réclamer une, que tu payes un loyer pour pouvoir t'asseoir sur une chaise dans ton appartement quand bon te ssemble. Tu n'arrives toujours pas à te concentrer sur ton deuil. Tu te mets à coudre des plumes sur ton corset pour ton costume d'Halloween. Toujours ces guenilles. Toujours ces post-enfants occupés à boire de la bière et à foutre le bordel chez toi, tu n'es plus capable de les écouter parler, toujours tu vois les failles et les faiblesses dans leurs conversations, mais tu ne dis jamais rien, tu prends ton trou, tu couds tes plumes et tu fumes une cigarette après l'autre, tes yeux te picotent mais tu ne brailles toujours pas. Pas envie d'en parler.

RAPHAËLLE

Jackie et Alice sont arrivées. Caprice a traîné son nouveau chum. Elle le présente à Jackie et Alice. Les fennecs s'énervent. Vickie ne rencontre jamais ce type de garçon qui fait tout pour la fille qu'il aime, comme dans les films. Elle a mis la pellicule à l'envers. Elle s'est réveillée sans son linge dans un bain au métro Cadillac. On lui a menti, on l'a dopée, on l'a volée. Il y a des choses pour lesquelles les petites culottes sont décoratives. Je range ma caméra dans son étui, je prends une photo de ma caméra dans son étui avec mon cell. Je l'envoie au Musée d'art contemporain. Dans mes rêves. Je préfère la guédille gluante qui pend de la bouche de Vickie à la phrase complète. Je vais lui essuyer la bouche, même si elle haït ça.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

Tommy et son collègue de job Magella débarquent avec une petite ration de rhum et des choses à dire. Tu ne les connais pas, tu les rencontres. Vous parlez un peu. Tu apprends que le Mexicain anglophone assis à l'autre bout de la table, personne ne le connaît, que le chum d'Alice l'a rencontré dans la rue et a décidé de le ramener à la maison. Il a des yeux de tueur ou de violeur, le Mexicain, tu paranoïes en toi-même, ça te fait un peu de drama, tu te dis que tu pourrais passer par la peur pour arriver au deuil mais en vain. Rien ne fonctionne. Jackie fait son agace comme d'habitude; il y a des mecs dans la place, ça fait un déclic dans sa petite tête de linotte. Elle se met debout sur sa chaise et montre son cul. Elle raconte des anecdotes d'elle nue saoule dans des endroits où tu es allée toi aussi, des anecdotes que tu as entendues mille fois de trop parce que tu étais là toi aussi cinquante pour cent du temps. Elle crie, elle parle de musique avec Magella, elle

sait tout, elle connaît tout sur la musique, elle interrompt tout le monde pour partager ce savoir que tu as entendu déballer encore une fois mille fois de trop parce que tu le savais déjà. Tu es tannée de l'entendre. Tu te dis : Mets tes guenilles, sors de cet appartement emboucané, va à l'Esco boire une bière et réfléchir. Alors tu mets ton manteau. Tommy et Magella avaient du fun à jaser avec toi, ils disent qu'ils vont aller te rejoindre là-bas après leur dernier verre. Jackie crie moiiiiii aussssiiii, tu te dis fuck, tu souhaites qu'elle pass out sur la table, tu as envie de l'assommer, mais c'est justement ça, le problème, elle est trop sonnée les matines. Vouloir marier des hommes riches et ne pas en être capable, c'est son drame. Tu n'as pas envie que ça soit le tien mais tu habites avec, elle te colle au cul et trémousse le sien sans cesse dans ta face. Là tu es dehors. Là tu es à l'Esco. Toujours pas de deuil, toujours des guenilles. Tu regardes ce que les gens portent dans le bar, tu te dis que c'est la seule chose dont tu es capable de te souvenir, alors tu scannes minutieusement tous les boutons de toutes les vestes et toutes les ceintures de tous les pantalons, les tatouages de pattes de chat sur les seins, les lunettes sans verres, les bottillons de cuir. Jackie et les autres arrivent, tu sens que Jackie va se toucher les seins en public, et toi tu te sens comme lundi, mardi, mercredi, comme tous les jours. Mardi, Thomas est mort, Jackie se touchait les seins en public, je m'achetais une rose de deux pieds pour me remonter le moral. Dehors. Cigarette. Tout le monde suit. Tu parles avec Tommy. Tu penses qu'il s'appelle Thomas parce que ton cerveau te fait des clins d'œil mais tu t'en apercevras juste plus tard, alors tu ne l'appelles jamais par son nom. Tu ne veux pas que ça fasse mal. C'est chiant quand ça fait mal en public et tu aurais bien beau te toucher les seins comme une déchaînée toi aussi que ça ne changerait rien à rien. Last call. Tu cales ton verre. Tu rentres avec Tommy et Jackie chez vous. Vous « empruntez » une caisse de douze à Alice et Patrick, vous leur laissez un vingt sur la table de chevet. Jackie veut écouter Toy Story 3, on regarde Toy Story

3, on ne l'écoute pas, elle s'endort, on parle. On parle toute la nuit et ça fait du bien de parler. Thomas-Tommy est intéressant, il a vécu dans la rue, il n'a rien d'un junkie, il ne l'a pas été, ça figure. Je le trouve sexy et j'ai un peu envie de lui, mais je ne veux pas y penser. Il a une blonde chez lui qui fait dodo toute seule dans leur grand lit. Normalement, tu t'en fous, de la morale, mais tu te dis que tu ne peux pas t'en foutre aujourd'hui, ça ferait trop de choses à traiter en même temps. Toujours pas de deuil. Thomas-Tommy s'en va. Tu t'endors fière de toi.

RAPHAËLLE

Demain je vais passer la voir. Sa nouvelle occupation : longer des murs. Il faut bien quelqu'un pour interpréter ces silences dans les autres chambres. Elle est là pour interpréter. Moi, je lis. Hors de moi, je lis. Tant de raisonnements douloureux, de résonances magnétiques. Ça sonne presque pareil, mais c'est complètement différent. C'est dans une grosse machine que ça se passe. Les raisonnements, ça ne passe pas. Il n'y a pas la machine pour. Elle n'existe pas encore. Il faudrait une machine avec plein de bras, de chaînes de métal. Il la faudrait juste pour moi. Un seul numéro de série et ma main pour le noter. Pas de calme, pas d'expression dans ma face.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

Tu te réveilles d'un des meilleurs, d'un des pires wet dreams de ta vie le lendemain après-midi. Il était là et vous vous sautiez dessus en cachette. Il avait une bosse de huit pouces de long et de trois pouces de large dans ses pantalons et il frenchait fucking bien et Dieu que le sexe était bon, tu en vibres encore quand tu te réveilles. Tout ça te fâche comme ce n'est pas possible. Quelqu'un est mort, quelqu'un que tu as connu et ça ne t'empêche pas d'aller boire une bière

entre amis, ça ne t'empêche pas de faire un wet dream pas possible où il y a un mec avec une fucking pastèque pour pénis. Tu te dis que toi quand tu vas mourir tu voudrais que les gens ne puissent pas faire ces choses-là, que ça ait plus d'effet sur eux. Tu veux, tu veux tellement pouvoir donner l'exemple, mais tu n'es pas capable. Tu es triste, mais pas assez. Celui qui est mort, tu ne l'as jamais connu trop bien, tu as juste su à peu près c'était qui, le manque de substance de cette relation t'empêche de ressentir une vraie émotion, une vraie tristesse, de vivre un vrai deuil. Tout ce dont tu es capable, c'est d'offrir tes condoléances à sa faille. D'acheter des fleurs, de dire « mes condoléances » et de prendre les gens dans tes bras au besoin. Mais, quand tu y penses, tu te dis que, si quelqu'un dans ton entourage mourait et que des tonnes de visages inconnus venaient te jouer ce numéro, ça finirait par te fâcher, t'insulter que personne ne partage ta peine, ton manque, ta détresse. Ça finirait par t'insulter qu'ils aient une haleine de bière et dans les yeux une queue bien bandée.

RAPHAËLLE

J'ai vidé le contenu de l'enveloppe brune. De la guenille, des écouteurs noirs, des amis. Une centaine de fennecs pour chacun. L'amie est morte. Ses amis aussi.

THOMAS HILFIGER.DOC

Thomas se passait un tie-wrap autour du cou. Au même moment, dans mon ordinateur, Uffie poussait des portes et des figurants hors de son chemin. Thomas se pendait avec son tie-wrap autour du cou. Dans mon ordinateur, j'écrivais : Ryan Gosling est tellement sexy. Thomas mort

attendait qu'on découvre son corps et moi, au même moment, j'achetais de grandes plumes blanches, un tutu blanc et un masque pour mon costume de cygne dans un magasin de la rue Mont-Royal. Toujours ces guenilles. Toujours ces contrastes. Toujours ce maquillage. Tel est mon drame : les vulgarités de la vie me rattrapent toujours tôt ou tard, si pas aujourd'hui, demain, si pas tout de suite, tout à l'heure. Jamais je ne pourrai écrire de belles histoires d'amour, en tout cas jamais avec facilité, toujours je devrai pousser des portes et des figurants hors de mon chemin, crier au loup, et par-dessus tout chialer et tout dramatiser.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

J'ai encore mal au foie.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

J'ai vingt-trois ans. Pourquoi j'ai mal au foie?

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

Je suis étourdie. Mon cœur bat vraiment trop lentement.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

Mon corps est encore scrap.

Je me demande comment ce serait, mourir,

ou comment ce serait, passer à un cheveu de.

J'imagine le stop-motion jusqu'au téléphone,

juste avant de.

Comme ça.

Dans le salon de ma mère.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

Ma bouteille d'eau est vide. Il me reste deux gorgées.

Il me reste deux coches sur cette batterie de vie.

Vraiment pas fort.

Je rote, what the fuck.

Peut-être que je réagis au chili, sieste post-repas.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

J'ai l'impression q'une journée entière a passé

chaque fois que j'ouvre les yeux.

C'est mélangeant, c'est contradictoire.

C'est comme si je me réveillais et m'endormais

en même temps.

Oréo, trois.

Sommeil blanc.

Je ferme les yeux et je garde les yeux fermés longtemps.

Appendix II

Pavillon C

VICKIE

Tous les jours, depuis le vingt-deuxième traitement, je pense que je vais mourir sur la table de radio, que mon cœur va me sortir du torse, qu'il va exploser. Crises de panique. Je dois toujours garder le dos cambré, exagérément cambré. Mon livre me rattrape, la maladie aussi. Ça m'arrive généralement après avoir mangé. Les palpitations, les yeux en roues de char, l'impression d'être un tas avec une mèche. C'est fini, tout est terminé. Je suis obligée d'avaler plus de pilules, plus souvent, pour éviter d'avoir le sentiment de mourir. Ça ne s'invente pas, tout ça. Rien ici ne s'invente. Tout est raconté. Je me rends au cinquième sous-sol, je scanne ma carte pour qu'ils sachent que je suis présente. Vickie Gendreau est demandée à la salle L. J'y vais. Je patiente dans une des deux salles de déshabillage. Ces salles, elles sont là pour les gens qui doivent se mettre en jaquette pour leurs traitements. Moi, je reste habillée. Les technologues filles aiment ce que je porte. J'ai toujours minimum un compliment. Les filles, ça fait ça, des compliments, quand ça rencontre d'autres filles pour la première fois. C'est comme un mécanisme. D'habitude, Dominic vient me chercher. Aujourd'hui, c'est Alex. On est prêts, tu es prête, allons dans cette salle utiliser cette machine. Essayons de te sauver. Alex a de longs cheveux en couette et maintenant que j'y pense il ressemble un peu à un oiseau. Moi aussi je peux faire des compliments, je suis une fille. Une fille aussi nerveuse et cardiaque qu'un lapin. Dominic est parti en congé de paternité. Je me sens mal, je ne lui ai pas posé les questions. C'est un garçon ou une fille? Son nom? Juste félicitations et ça a été un plaisir. C'est awkward entre Dominic et moi

depuis que je lui ai dit en m'allongeant sur la machine : Enwèye, pine-moi contre la table, Dominic. On m'installe un masque blanc à trous sur le visage. Les technologues sortent. Alex me parle dans son micro. Le traitement dure quinze minutes. Vers sept minutes, ça se met à goûter le métal dans ma gorge. Il me reste encore huit traitements pour identifier ce goût.

MAXIME

Tu n'es pas venue à mes funérailles ni à ma célébration de vie. Vickie, je suis mort. J'espère que toi aussi. As-tu un numéro pour de la bonne MDMA? Ça ne se trouve pas à l'épicerie d'ici.

CATHERINE

Pourquoi avez-vous une poupée gonflable dans les bras, mademoiselle? Où allez-vous ainsi? Je dépasse le dépanneur. Je me rends à la garderie de Féérique dans la nuit. C'est fermé. Je laisse Vickie Gonflable sur la chaussée et je pleure. Le nez plein de morve. Ce n'est pas beau. Un rossignol vient se poser sur mon épaule. Je me mouche avec.

MIKKA

Je dors. Je me réveille en sursaut. Une botte m'a revolé sur la tête. Ça réveille, une botte. Je me lève doucement. Il ne reste plus de café. Je m'habille pour aller en chercher. Une enveloppe brune m'attend sur le pas de la porte. Il y a un char rouge parké en double. Le voisin se fait livrer une poutine. On est dimanche, il est le lendemain de veille, c'est son heure.

STANISLAS

Je fais des cunnis à Samantha dans mon coin alors que toi tu fais ta chimio dans ton bain. Je t'ai envoyé une dizaine de cartes postales pendant mon voyage aux États-Unis. Tu m'as dit les avoir punaisés avec des boucles d'oreilles à une toile laide du IKEA. Tu me l'as dit dans le temps que tu me parlais encore.

VICKIE

Là, aujourd'hui, on est le 22 juillet 2012, je suis à l'hôpital Notre-Dame. Le 21 mai 2012, j'étais à Rouyn sur la scène, en train de me trémousser le bonbon, c'était la fête de ma mère mais turns out que c'était aussi la fête de Pauline, l'infirmière qui s'occupe de mes prises de sang, et c'était aussi la fête de mon médecin de radio, Dr Bahary. Le 6 juin 2012, j'apprenais pour ma tumeur, et c'était la fête de mon père. Mon père, il avait peur d'avoir le cancer des testicules, très peur, il avait passé plein de tests au privé. Il s'est pointé au fameux rendez-vous des résultats, le docteur est sorti pour annoncer le nom du prochain patient. Alain Gendreau. Deux hommes se sont levés. Il y avait un autre Alain Gendreau juste là, devant lui. Cet autre Alain Gendreau avait non seulement le même nom mais un rendez-vous juste avant le sien. Ils ont dû sortir leurs cartes d'assurance maladie pour que le médecin associe les résultats aux bonnes gosses. Demain, c'est mon vingt-quatrième traitement. Il sera suivi d'un massage. C'est dix piastres pour une heure. Par madame Verdi, qui est elle aussi née le 14 avril, comme moi. Elle le savait pour le *Titanic*, qui a coulé à notre fête mais pas pour Alexandre Jardin. Elle doit bien se crisser d'Alexandre

Jardin, son nom de famille est autrichien, c'est mille fois plus glamour. Alexander Who? Who cares.

TRAITEMENT 24.DOC

Machine, je me sens comme un tas d'organes, j'ai peur. Alex va être obligé de découper dans mon masque des trous pour les narines et la bouche avant le traitement de demain. J'ai acheté un CD pour me calmer. Je mets toutes les chances de mon bord. Je suis allée au Musée d'art contemporain cet après-midi. J'avais oublié mon chapeau et le soleil devant l'entrée du musée n'épargnait personne. Je me suis mise à l'ombre pour fumer mes cigarettes. L'ombre, ça me faisait penser à toi, machine. J'aimerais te filmer en action. Peut-être que je devrais demander à ce que ma mère reste avec moi dans la salle tout le long du traitement et me parle. Je vais prendre des grosses respirations avant et pendant. Tu m'épuises, et ma pulsion de vie, tu la fracasses. J'ai l'impression d'être un tas d'organes avec une mèche.

VICKIE

Stanislas, homme que j'aime mais qui ne m'aime pas édition 2012, je ne peux plus parler, de tout, de rien, de mes traitements. De mon quotidien. Homme de ma vie mais moi pas femme de la tienne, je passe déjà trop de temps sur Facebook puisque c'est là que je te rejoignais, c'est sur Facebook que j'allais t'attendre. Attendre que tu te connectes pour te parler du nouveau papillon, le grand porte-queue, attendre que tu te connectes pour te parler de ma pièce, attendre que tu te connectes pour te parler de ma journée, de mon thé à la rose, de mes biscuits au chocolat noir, de

tout ce qui m'anime le quotidien, du plus infime détail. Des mes gâteaux au citron, de celui d'Isabelle, de celui de mon beau-père, et les comparer. Rire de toi avec toi. Te décrire dans le détail l'expo Zoo au Musée d'art contemporain. Le hibou qui dort, les crabes qui se dévorent eux-mêmes, les crânes humains sertis de pierres. Je le sens, comme c'est difficile de vivre sans toi aujourd'hui. On aurait été censés être en chemin vers Sudbury en ce moment. J'aurais fait des biscuits pour la route. J'aurais fait des sandwiches pas de croûtes. J'aurais amené des cigarettes électroniques, celles que Francis m'a données pour que je fume moins.

RAPHAËLLE

Elle avait la même date de fête que sa massothérapeute, elle n'est pas allée aux funérailles de Max, les séries n'ont jamais été à reconstruire. Elles ont toujours été là, sages, à l'attendre, à attendre sa fin imminente. Moi et mes guenilles, on ne sait plus dans quel ordre se placer dans la phrase. C'est les guenilles qu'on doit placer devant, même aujourd'hui? Aujourd'hui, ce n'est la fête de personne. Aujourd'hui, elle est morte.

TRAITEMENT 25.DOC

L'infirmière m'a donné une pilule bleue avant mon traitement. Je suis entrée, j'ai posé mon poème à tes pieds de machine. J'ai donné le CD de Grimes au technologue. Skip la première. Il avait fait des trous pour mon nez et ma bouche sur mon masque. Il m'a parlé tout le long, ou peut-être que c'était la technologue fille. Je sais en tout cas que je n'ai pas vu de chats méchants comme des scans de dentistes couronnés de poil comme hier. J'ai vu des taches d'encre. Ça avait

l'air doux, doux, doux, pourtant. Fuzzy danger. Tout est dans la pilule bleue. Elle vient de me sauver pour la suite de mes traitements. C'est à elle que je vais devoir écrire dorénavant. Tu comprends, belle machine d'amour. J'ai un sourire niais et j'enfile les cigarettes. Mon café est chaud. L'air climatisé est installé. Mon oncle est passé cet après-midi. Mon père doit passer plus tard. Il va me laisser des sous. Je suis rendue pas mal pauvre avec l'aide sociale. Quand je dansais, je pouvais faire jusqu'à trois mille dollars en une semaine, à Fermont jusqu'à cinq mille. Bien manger, ça me suffit comme luxe. J'aime cuisiner pour les amis. Ils viennent me visiter dans mon havre de maladie. Je les remercie en leur laissant des biscuits ou des hauts de cuisses de poulet au Boursin. Je ne suis pas morte encore, je ne suis pas écœurée de mourir mais guérir, c'est long. Guérir, ce n'est pas garanti mais on va essayer quand même. On va être l'équipe de football et toutes les cheerleaders à la fois.

ANNA

Je veux faire de l'art avec son masque de radio. Je n'ose pas en parler à sa mère ni à Mathieu. Il est encore trop tôt. Il faudrait que je me rende au département de radio-oncologie et que je demande. Puis-je avoir le masque de Vickie, le masque où vous avez fait deux trous pour les narines et un trou pour la bouche?

MATHIEU

Anna l'a emmenée au Musée d'art contemporain. Anna l'a emmenée au MAC. Vickie avait un Mac. Elle me l'a légué. Je l'ai mis sur mon ventre. Sa mère me l'a donné. Je l'ai vidé.

TRAITEMENT 30.DOC

Douce ovale pilule bleue, tu es si belle de jour et tu me knockes si bien la nuit. Tu me calmes la patate. Tu fais de mon cœur une frite et de mon sang du ketchup, comme dans la chanson. Ô douce pilule bleue, avec ton petit look de Viagra, avec tes airs de vacances hors taxes, tu me coûtes cher. Mais oh que tu me fais du bien. Tu me fais ce qu'il faut, tu me le fais comme il faut.

VICKIE

On est le 27 juillet 2012. C'est le jour de la vraie fête de Mathieu. Il se choisit chaque année une fausse date de fête généralement en septembre ou en novembre. On s'est rencontrés à sa vraie fête. Il m'avait plaquée contre le mur de l'entrée d'une boutique au coin des Pins et St-Lau. Naguère, jadis, quand on se voulait encore. Tout est mieux cérébral que corporel. En veux-tu d'autres, des chiffres? Je suis rendue à vingt-quatre pilules et demie aujourd'hui. Je coûte trois cent mille piastres à l'État pour ma guérison, environ. C'est mon infirmière pivot qui aime les chiffres ronds. Moi, tous les chiffres, je les déteste. J'aime les lettres, les initiales, les mots (V.G. mange des animaux morts). Tu fermes les yeux. On ouvre les lumières rouges à l'arrière du stage. « Living Dead Girl » de Rob Zombie part. Un remix d'ordi de DJ. Si tu n'as pas la toune originale, faut le dire, bé. Mathieu capote. Il se dit que mes fuck-me boots, c'est un choix adéquat. Il va enfin me voir danser. Je ne monte pas les marches. Je fais signe au DJ. Il met mon CD, un peu en crise.

ANNA

Vickie est entrée dans la pièce dripping in gold. Dripping in, oui, c'est du British slang. Vickie avait le cerveau moucheté de freckles à la Pollock et moi je me demande ce que Picasso dessinait sur ses strudels. Je la regarde tourner autour de son poteau avec ses fuck-me boots et ça me calme. C'est ainsi que je veux la voir dans mes souvenirs. Gold et nue.

MAMAN

Je ne veux pas voir ma fille se dénuder. Elle m'a invitée, elle m'a obligée. Elle veut que je puisse me souvenir de tout, moi aussi. Je veux me souvenir d'elle à cinq ans pour toujours. Encore vierge et naïve dans cette belle robe qui lui donnait l'air d'un papillon.

STANISLAS

Je ne me rappelle plus pourquoi j'ai cessé de vouloir baiser avec. Tous les gars la fixent, la veulent. Elle est agile. Petit feel miraculé.

LE FRÈRE

Go, la sœur, t'es la plus forte. Char Rouge danse autour du petit poteau dans ma main. Je me dis que Char Rouge pourrait être partout, que ça pourrait être n'importe qui ici. Tu m'as fait rentrer. Ils le savent que je suis trop jeune ma ça a pas l'aire de les déranger. Premier stage du shift de

midi. C'est de toi dret comme ça que je veux me souvenir. Les jambes enlacées au zénith de la pole. Ma sœur est plus flexible que la tienne.

VICKIE

La rapide est faite, go pour la slow. « The Hardest Button to Button », le remix de Golden Filter, part. Je remonte sur le stage avec ma robe multicolore.

LE DJ

Et maintenant, veuillez accueillir sur le stage la très sensuelle Lily! Suivie back à back de l'excellente Kimora! Faites du bruit pour un show d'lesbiennes. Elles, elles se mangent pour de vrai!

VICKIE

Ma robe a l'air d'une harpe, je joue un riff, twiste mon mamelon pour la distorsion. Mes pédales me montent à la mi-cuisse, plus de grip sur la pole, je me mets la tête à l'envers. Sur le beat, toujours sur le beat, je descends au sol rapidement. Mes talons résonnent sur le stainless, l'écho me pogne dans le ventre, j'enlève mon g-string. Sur le beat, en le faisant zigzaguer par en bas, sur le beat. Toujours sur le beat.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

Une chose par jour, un pas, un agenda rouge.

Je vais quelque part.

Je parle à quelqu'un.

Je ferme les yeux, j'ouvre les yeux.

Je regarde par la fenêtre.

Je ferme un œil, je tape à une main.

Le filet de fumée.

J'ai la peau de plusieurs teintés.

J'ai pris plus de vingt minutes de soleil mais pas trente, pour avoir l'air moins malade.

Je pense au preneur de son des Archives de l'âme, le documentaire sur la Nuit de la poésie de 1970.

J'ai pensé à lui plusieurs fois cette semaine.

J'aime m'imaginer sa voix.

Sa vie à capter la voix des autres avec des micros défectueux.

De tout, d'absolument tout, et de rien.

Je vais me souvenir de tout, c'est obligé.

Surtout des silences.

Je garde les yeux fermés longtemps.